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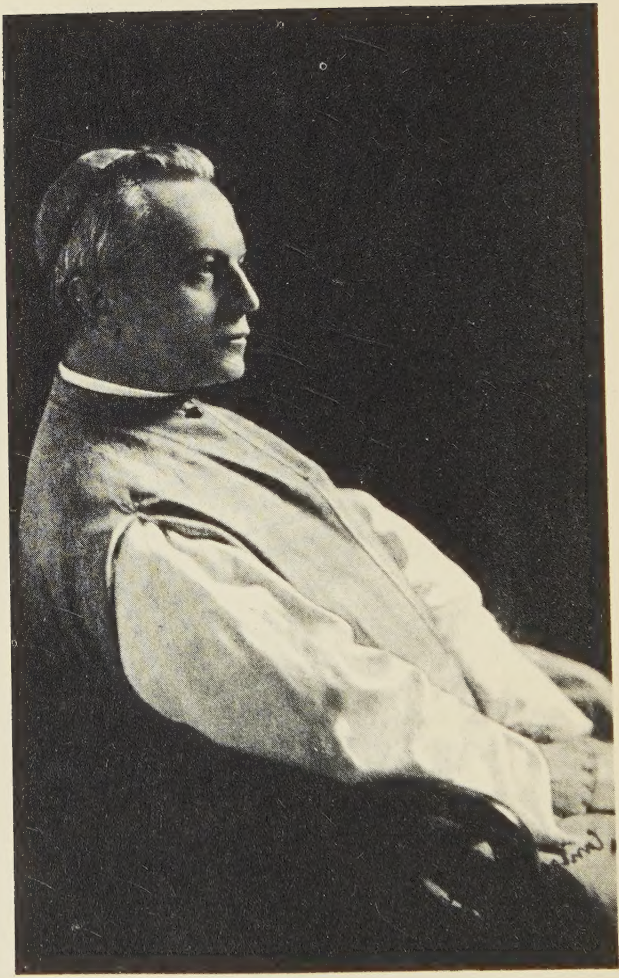
ON THE GOSPELS



OTTOKAR PROHÁSZKA

Meditations on the Gospels

By the Right Reverend

OTTOKAR PROHÁSZKA

Bishop of Székesfehérvár

Authorized translation from the Hungarian

BY M. DE PÁL

Foreword by C. C. Martindale, S.J.

THREE VOLUMES IN ONE

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FOREWORD

THE writings of the late reverend Bishop Ottokar Prohaszka are published in twenty-five volumes. Yet writing was only a very small part of his life. In this foreword therefore we ought to say no more about that life—of which we earnestly pray for the full account—save what is necessary to convey to our readers what lay behind this literary output. Living a life which has been compared to that of St. Francis mated with that of St. Bernard, he has also been set intellectually above Newman, seeing that his range of interests was wider and his output more varied in theme. His style is said to be no less original than beautiful; his method no less simple than profound. Rising daily at five, he spent two hours in prayer, and then did the daily tasks. Then he wrote, standing always at his desk, for two to four hours: in the afternoons he paid his spiritual visits, usually on foot, and it was then that he thought out the morrow's theme. Once he had written, he rarely altered anything save this word or that, which was the more remarkable because he was constantly interrupted, especially during the teaching years, by the race of ecclesiastical students, whose intellectual ardour knows no pity. He took no further thought of what he had written once it was published. He practically never kept either manuscript or printed book of his own work.

He was born in 1858, the year of the apparition at Lourdes. Naturally, perhaps, his sojourn at the Jesuit college of Kalocsa inspired him with a desire to join the

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Society; but his parents and Simor, the prince-primate of Hungary, combined to dissuade him and he was admitted at the seminary of Esztergom. Here indeed he found his true vocation. His early studies were so brilliant that Simor, sent him to the Germanico-Hungaricum college at Rome for philosophy and theology. He learnt several languages, including English, before his visit to America in 1904. Physics and mathematics however occupied him no less than literature. The *Meditations on the Gospels* are the fruit of that daily meditation which he never failed to make and inculcate. In 1881 he was ordained at the Trinità de' Monti. Cardinal Mazella declared that the young priest's mind was so strong that it would impress millions—'if,' he added, 'he were a heretic, he would disturb no fewer.'

The first few years after ordination were spent at Esztergom in various teaching capacities which he combined with an intensive visiting of the whole neighbourhood. Already he was contemplating the *total* restoration of Catholic life, the summing up of Catholics into Christ. And already he was writing, though under the pseudonym Pethö, in the review known as the Hungarian Sion. But without doubt his spiritual work within the seminary was more wonderful than his scientific work—he was convinced that 'independent regular meditation' was necessary for all who aspired to the priesthood; the prince-primate told him that no superior in the world could bring this to pass; Prohászka succeeded.

At the same time he was no less careful to insist on better food for the seminarists, better heating, and a drastic rearrangement of the day. Meanwhile he was learning to breakfast off half a roll of bread, keeping the other half for the first poor child he might meet.

His first independent work was *God and the World* (1892);

it was followed by *Christian Repentance and Forgiveness*. But while writing these his exterior work among the poor and his already Franciscan charity were becoming known, and lent great weight to the ideals which he inculcated in the retreat system that he inaugurated and to the lectures given not only to University students at Budapest, but to men—often creedless or 'liberal'—who had never expected to find their way to church again. His book *Earth and Heaven*, dealing with the points at which theology and geology might touch, proved a great encouragement to those who feared there was a divorce between faith and science, and one may almost say that to Prohászka the reawakening of Hungarian spiritual culture was due. I do not however propose to give a list of his books: it is fairly safe to say that he took men where he found them, and developed them: he did not first ruin human ideals and achievements in order to try to build a spiritual edifice above their devastation; but he used every atom of material supplied to him wherever he might move, and incorporated even the most fragmentary elements into his splendid synthesis. From 1905 he lectured weekly on subjects like God, the Soul, and all that was most fundamental, in the great hall of the University, which held six hundred: it was always full.

But in that same year the popular voice, we read, made itself irresistibly heard: 'Ottokar Episcopum!' Pius X personally consecrated him together with Count Zichy in the Sistine chapel, and he was sent to the very poor diocese of Székesfehérvár. His predecessor in that see presented him to it with the words: 'I offer you as my successor one the lachet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.' His spiritual, apostolic and literary life continued simultaneously without intermission: as Bishop, he constantly gave retreats; and set, or reinforced, that practice which I noticed and so much admired in regions then comprised in Hungary, of bishops spending long hours in the confessional. I knew one who was seated there from soon after four in the morning, and not till eleven did he leave it to say his Mass. You may believe that during Lent he heard the confessions of an entire city.

In 1911 he who had always, as he said, 'slept strongly,' began to know the horrors of insomnia. He who is described as hitherto a 'jubilant giant,' as one who had done more for Catholic restoration than 'whole religious orders,' had to attend for the first time to his health. The war none the less came to redouble his exertions and halve his strength. It was now that he stood forth as a really eminent social reformer, though of the strictly political side of his life, before or after this period, I am hardly competent to write. Not only for orphans, not only for the wounded and for their desolate families did he work; but he started a land-reform which should have caused men returning from the front to feel that Christian justice had been preparing for them. Revolution was followed by the appalling Communist outbreak. He refused to fly; he abated not one item of his public work: when his house was invaded and he was told that he must manage with two rooms only, he answered: 'One will be enough.' I have sat in an orchard the boughs of whose fruit-trees had bent beneath the corpses of martyrs killed by Bela Kun's Communists: perhaps even those ruffians realised that to kill Prohászka would have raised the city against them. It was the parish priest to whom that orchard belonged, who first told me of Prohászka. When the Red Peril was passed, everything that could be called Christian national organisation looked towards the Bishop, though all he had hitherto begun had perished. Material help, he could offer none—he had sold every personal little treasure that he could find, for bread for his dear poor. He parcelled out parts of his territory into allotments; and small wonder that in 1920 he could not refuse the demand that he should be elected to the new Parliament. He struggled vainly against one position of importance after another till he shrank back appalled at the thought of being made Prime Minister.

He had never ceased to perform any one of his ordinary episcopal duties, including the giving of retreats and the development of ecclesiastical education; when the parliament was dissolved in 1922 he was naturally more free for this; and when in 1925 he began to fall sick he used the opportunity for writing some of his best books. But no one was less like an invalid! Broad-shouldered, steely-muscled, upstanding, with eyes whose flash revealed the active brain, he in these last years was never so genial, so ready for what was asked; and, we confess, in the last year of all he said good-bye to doctors and did as he pleased. Impossible to relate the list of his activities performed or planned.

On March 27th, 1927, he spoke, on a bitter day, at the unveiling of a tablet in the Museum garden at Budapest. Till April 1st, he gave the University conferences to a vast audience of men. That day he offered Mass in the Chapel of the Social Mission and filled the rest of the day with personal expeditions of charity till the hour for the Conference, when he mentioned, in the sacristy, that he was not feeling well. His theme was Sin, Repentance and Forgiveness. In the midst of his conference he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and collapsed. The place was full of doctors who ran to the pulpit. But he would not descend till he had given the Benediction with his left, unstricken hand, and said strongly: 'May God Almighty bless you.' He added in a whisper: 'Thank you.'

Next day he died, the seminary having been surrounded, meanwhile, by an enormous crowd.

You may say that the whole of Budapest accompanied the coffin to the station. As the train steamed towards Székesfehérvár, every village came down to salute it. His body lies amid the veneration of those who pray that his soul may be declared, some day, to share the glory of the blessed.

I pray then that this book may be the beginning of our information concerning one who was a glory of the realm of Hungary, so dear to us ; of the Episcopate united with the See of Peter : and whose energies, spiritual and social, should inspire all priests who labour for Christ in many another land.

C. C. M.

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INTRODUCTION

I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (*John* x, 10.) I wish to serve this purpose of Jesus at His Incarnation, and to that end I am sending this book out into the world. It is intended to assist in the development of the life of Christ within our souls.

Man upon earth is a citizen of two worlds, and draws his life from two sources, from nature and from grace. Nature appears before him as a beautiful, mysterious fact; everything within it—from the stars and seas and forests, down to the tiniest blade of grass—conceals the mystery of God's thought, is beautiful in the steady rhythm of its lines and colours, and is the sublime expression of eternally unfathomable Truth. The greatness of creation impresses us, grips us in the core of our being, and stamps the seal of its splendour upon our inner life. Nature is a symphony, which teaches the human soul to sing. In meadow and forest, in the star-sown sky, in the restlessly heaving waters, there is revealed a mighty, vital force, the incarnation of God's creative ideas; this enlightens and elevates man, and leads him on to the supersensual world of the intellect and the spirit, to a fresh wealth of beauty and of sublimity. And this world as well has its sun and moon and stars, heights and depths, light and darkness; it possesses an inexhaustible store of types and forms, and is immeasurably fertile and productive. In the world of the spirit, art and science, social and economic life have developed, and beyond its borders we see the perspective of God's kingdom, in which He Himself creates and fashions souls after the pattern of Christ, by their capacities and emotions, joys and sufferings, lives and deaths. He is Christ, Artist and Model in one, Who has manifested Himself to humanity in the matchless revelation that is the Gospel. It is our blessed task to open our hearts to His message, and to shape our lives into conformity with the ideal which He sets before us.

This, then, is the great purpose, which this book is intended to further. It is to help souls in building up within themselves the life of Christ, that is to say, to introduce them to the essence of Christ's life, and to exercise heart and soul alike in penetrating to those depths which are opened up to us by the mysteries of existence, of nature and grace and supernatural life. Just as the eagle knows no fear when he soars in dizzy heights beyond the reach of human eyes, so the soul must not be troubled when it awakens to a consciousness of the divine power which pulsates within it, or when it hears the voice of love exhorting it to imitation, and the heroic inspirations which issue from the life of Christ. No, it must plunge willingly into the depths, cast away fear, and rejoice. And the soul cannot rejoice while it is still clinging to the rocks of worldly feeling and pride and sensuality, and is swept by the storms of desire. Yet even then the soul is conscious of the yearning for the better; it strives for tranquillity and seeks its true home, but cannot find it. It is in need of a helping hand to set it on the homeward track, on the way to God. Here Christ goes before us and encourages us. 'Launch out into the deep,' He tells us, 'and let down your nets . . . and follow Me.'

Christ is God Himself in human shape, and I have to adore Him, and delight in His sublime beauty, in the depth and unique quality of His Soul, in the powerful originality of His mind, in the charm which He diffuses and in the life which flows forth from Him. My soul hangs upon His lips and hearkens to His every word. I see God reflected in Him as in a mirror ; I bow my head upon His hands and surrender my heart to Him. He is God's Instrument, He will form me and harmonize the conflicting elements within me. I wish I could persuade all men to believe this and to act upon their belief. Do not let us search in all directions and at random for the sources of better and higher life ; do not let us waste time in the analysis of the symbols of existence ; let us rather turn to Christ and contemplate Him. If we do this in love and humility, then His spirit and His image will gradually be absorbed into our being.

Those who contemplate Christ will get to know God ; they are drawn towards Him irresistibly. When He walked upon earth He attracted publicans and sinners, rich young men, Peters and Magdalens, a thousand times over ; and still to-day he calls souls to Him. Divine power and divine life stream from Him, and are imparted to us by His glance, His words, and His touch. That is why He came upon earth, that He might bring and bestow life ; and to Him alone did God grant the power to do so. It is true that profound thinkers have existed, such as Socrates, Plato, and Plotinus, who have given men great ideas ; but they could not offer them life, and by the side of Christ they are but pale, if glorious, shadows.

In order to give free play to the life-giving activity of Christ in our souls, and to derive the fullest possible benefit from His teaching and His example, we must approach Him in the right frame of mind and with the decks of the soul cleared for action. Unless we do this the Gospel will remain, where we are concerned, but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. If we really desire to assure our spiritual progress and success, we must comply with several conditions :

(*a*) We must enter into the closest possible contact with God, we must seek Him out and follow Him. This means that we must turn towards Him at every opportunity, whether it originates in the order of nature or on the order of grace ; call upon Him, and then listen attentively for His answer. For this, tranquillity and recollection are essential, and to make sure of them we must shut out the world and its affairs and retire within ourselves. Many people find this comes most easily to them in church, others in their home or their garden, others in the loneliness of the country or of the forest. We must choose whichever suits us best. The most suitable time for meditation is the morning, and it is best to meditate kneeling, if we are able to do so without undue strain. Before going to our night's rest, we should read through one or two points—not more—and after this we should not occupy ourselves with anything else. If we wake during the night, and when we get up in the morning, we should instantly direct our thoughts towards the subject of the meditation, and further occupy ourselves with it while we dress.

(*b*) It is one of the primary requirements of prayer that the soul should bow down before God with the most profound reverence—and with a pure heart. For purity of heart is the first obligation which reverence imposes. We must approach God, then, full of contrition for our sins, seeing to it that there is nothing in us to offend

Him, and to bar the way to His merciful condescension. The purification of the soul and the awakening of contrition are essential to the work of preparation, and to these must be added the frequent invocation of God alike during the meditation and in the course of the day.

(*c*) Great longing. We must approach God like the man who longs for life and draws it up in great draughts, like the man who with the enthusiasm of the true artist strives to express in his own soul that which he perceives to be beautiful and good; and like the man who craves for profound and rich interior life as Holy Scripture understands it :—' Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. And I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. . . . I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light, for her light cannot be put out.' (*Wisdom* vii, 7-10.)

(*d*) We must busy our intelligence with the subject of the meditation; that is, we must form a clear mental picture of the scene or event or sentence upon which we are meditating, examine it attentively, and penetrate it. By ' penetrating ' I mean that we must contemplate the subject, analyse it, link it up with different trains of thought, and illustrate it by contrasts. For instance, if I meditate upon Christ's words ' Launch out in the deep,' I picture to myself the coastline round Capharnaum, and the shore from which the boat is pushed off; the dirty surroundings, the people lingering at the landing place; and the bluish water, shallow round the coasts, deepening towards the centre of the Lake. I compare the dust of the shore with the clean, fresh air out upon the Lake itself, the shallows with the salty depths where the pearls are born and the storms slumber; and I remember that Our Lord bids us launch out into the deep. Therefore I am a sailor, and must venture out to sea; and Christ Himself is the depth upon which I float, the precious pearl beneath it, and the guiding star above. . . . We must analyse other scenes and events—Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary—in the same way, and do the same with Christ's sayings, sift them, expand them, apply them, and work them out. In this connection we may usefully employ the system of questioning which St. Ignatius advises, and ask ourselves: What is there here that I must take to heart? What is the practical truth which emerges from it? What are the motives which finally decide me to leave one thing undone and to do another? To what extent was this or that line of action moderate, just, useful, sweet, easy, or necessary? What has so far hindered me from putting the truth which I have perceived into practice? What methods and instruments do I propose to employ in the future? . . .

To us, truth must be the wide ocean into the depths of which we should ardently desire to plunge.

(*e*) But we cannot arrive at any noteworthy results without the help of a capacity for feeling. It is essential that we should set to work not only with our heads, but with our hearts as well. During our meditation we must awaken and stir emotions at every step—faith, hope, contrition, confidence, courage, humility, surrender, love—our hearts must glow, cling closely to God, pay Him homage and flame up towards Him. In this way the dry thought acquires life and spirit, form and power. The necessary, but often tedious, intellectual labour of building up a logical train of thought then becomes radiant in the light of our ideals, just as the spring sunshine floods the beech-woods with emerald light, and our souls are uplifted at the sight. Prayer must be as it were the flood and ebb of the soul—a rising to infinity, and a receding to the depths of its own lowliness ; it must be the unfolding of the soul's wings for flight, followed by the return to the nest.

If we pray in this manner, we shall not be tempted to doubt God's love ; instead we shall have boundless confidence in His guidance, and when we find that the gates of Heaven are open to us, we shall enter in without amazement at our kindly reception, because we know that it is our home.

(*f*) We must remember that if we try to follow too many lines of thought in any single meditation, we shall obtain but little result ; we must therefore select one individual truth and linger around it, if we desire it to enrich our souls. We must ask ourselves the question, How does this affect my spiritual life, not as a whole, but from such and such an aspect, with regard to such and such a virtue or difficulty, and where my good and bad impulses are concerned ? All these things must be considered separately, and detail work is most important in this connection. If we truly desire to fashion our spiritual life from its very depths, we must analyse the practice of virtue as well as our sins, faults, and evil tendencies, in the minutest detail, in order to cultivate what is good in all the separate circumstances and departments of life, and to extirpate what is evil root by root.

(*g*) Contemplation and analysis, however, are not sufficient ; we must proceed to the practice of virtue. The Spirit of God works unceasingly, and activity is the reflection of His essential Being ; He creates souls in His own image and likeness and fashions them. The latter is a lengthy process of developing, pruning, warming and purification. The soul has to do violence to itself, in order to make room for the divine life to enter; it attains salvation by way of self-denial. We must practise self-mastery, give up our own wills, persevere amidst dryness and lack of consolation, and suffer the weaknesses of the soul with patience. Even in the times of interior night and darkness we must go forward confidently, with perfect faith in God; we shall then taste the sweetness of a powerful inner life and not fear God's visitation. In this way the soul will begin to take root in reality, to tear down the veils of self-deception, and when it has made the sacrifice of its evil self, to practise virtue uninterruptedly. Reflection upon our spiritual progress and failures hitherto, and our increasing degree of illumination consequent upon the practices which I have outlined above, will continually increase the strength, depth, and truth of our spiritual life.

(*b*) We must carry over to our daily life the lessons we have learned and the resolutions we have formed as a result of our morning meditation, and recall these resolutions during the course of the day by means of short prayers, in order to spur ourselves on to fresh and higher endeavour.

I believe that the souls who practise this method of meditation will build up their spiritual life in the most satisfactory manner, for they make God and His grace their leader, approach Him ever more closely, and are guided by His inspirations. Their sensitiveness is thereby greatly heightened, and they respond the more readily to the impressions of the external world as well, to the beauties of the sea, of mountain valleys, and the evening dusk when the sound of bells drifts faintly through it; they are stirred by the mystic longing which is expressed in every soaring line of our Gothic churches and cathedrals, and by the first flowers which blossom on a newly-made grave. Yet how much more wonderful is God's touch upon our souls, now vigorous and powerful like that of the artist fashioning marble, now gentle and tender, like that of a mother caressing her child. The order of grace surpasses the order of nature, and the love of God stands far above all the pleasures of earthly love. To the soul who loves, the gracious countenance of Christ becomes visible, while the nearness to God of which it is conscious fills it with confidence, and with the energy which tolerates the existence neither of false gods nor of self-deception. The soul then desires one thing only: to be filled with God, to resemble Christ.

I was guided in the arrangement of the subjects for meditation by the endeavour to observe the chronological order of the Gospel as far as possible, and have not therefore divided the points according to the days of the month. This everyone can do for himself, according to his devotion and need.

The synopsis of contents at the end of the volume shows the subject and order of the meditations, and enables the reader to choose an appropriate theme without loss of time.

And so this book is sent out into the world to help souls in the great tasks of the inner life. God grant it success.

MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPELS

VOLUME I

THE BEGINNING OF ADVENT

(*a*) With the beginning of Advent we enter one of the most beautiful and appealing seasons of the ecclesiastical year. We join in the celebration of Advent and of its four Sundays with traditional zeal, for they are followed by the vigil, the longed-for Midnight, with its chorus of Glorias, and the feast of Christmas, with its three Masses.

What is Advent? It is a feast, a remembrance of days long gone by, and in it we commemorate past ages and hopes and longings. We sing antiphons which throb with the pain and hope of a thousand years. We remember the prophets, stand again in the holy darkness which surrounded them, and muffle our souls in the veil of their ancient visions. Why do we do all this? It is that we may rejoice all the more ardently in the sweet present which is ours, and which has arisen from that past. We picture to ourselves the fiery longing which stormed Heaven, seeking entry there, and we know that it has opened—and to us. We count the tears which watered earth, that it might grow fertile and flourish; and now spring has come. In Advent the Christian does with the mystery of redemption what the mother does in play with her child—she hides her face from it, and then peeps out at it, and makes it smile once more.

(*b*) But this Advent, which commemorates the past, reminds us of the Advent which is to be, when we must expect God's coming. In this sense our whole life is an

Advent. The Christmas of this Advent is our first sight of Christ's gracious and merciful countenance after death. Oh, that it might be so for me! *Mitis atque festivus Christi Jesu tibi aspectus appareat*—May my soul thus perceive the gentle, radiant Face of Jesus!

(*c*) The features of our mortal life strongly resemble those of Advent. What are these features?

(i) *Darkness.* The paths which lead from life to the other world are obscure. The human spirit moves amid darkness, its steps falter, and all around lurk doubt and uncertainty. Who will lead us safely through the night towards our goal? It is only the Church who can do this.

(ii) The second feature of Advent is *expectation.* We are filled with suspense, and continually ask ourselves, What is the state of my soul? When shall I die? We cannot be completely reassured; our anxiety for our salvation can throw us into feverish transports, and rob us of sleep. Our hopes are so great; the prophets have told us so much, raised our hopes to the highest pitch.

(iii) The third feature of Advent is faith and hope. *Deus ipse veniet*, God Himself will come to save us. This should teach us to believe not merely in the imminence of hell, but in that of heaven as well. And therefore we must pray for redemption with perfect trust and longing.

The spirit of Advent is not passive; it is essentially active. It exhorts us to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ.' During life's Advent, then, we must build up Christ in our souls. Human life is great because it is not an end in itself; it is the rope which swings perilously above the abyss, bridging the chasm between the animal and the spiritual order. It must be adaptable, and therefore characterized by endeavour, struggles, and hard work. Christian life and Christian asceticism will never be permitted to subside into indolence and inertia.

THE DARKNESS OF ADVENT

(*a*) There are two kinds of Advent, one which we commemorate, and one which we experience. The first celebrates the gratitude of Christianity, while returning to the confident expectation of days long past; the second consists of our personal experience, when we endeavour to conform to the standard which our great future sets before us. We then become conscious of the darkness which our own finiteness and the weakness and instability of human nature cast upon our mind, heart, and spirit, and upon life as a whole. Since the days of Adam this darkness is common to all without exception—from Abraham, by way of David, Isaias, the Baptist, St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Ignatius, to the last just man who died yesterday. From it we all seek deliverance; as Saint Paul says, 'we look for the Saviour, who will reform the body of our lowness.' Men looked to His light of old, and how often do we pray *lux perpetua luceat eis!* Like our forefathers, we too seek for the kingdom of God, our true country, and we too know that our abode here is not permanent, and that we must set forth to seek that which is better, and salvation. That is why I term our life on earth an Advent.

(*b*) The greatest darkness reigned upon earth in heathen times, and was due to the superstition and perverted outlook upon life which characterized paganism.

We recall the altars dedicated to Moloch and to Dagon, and the sufferings of humanity through sorcery and superstition, and the pain it endured at the hands of idolatrous priests, wizards, kings and tyrants. . . . We see physicians using fire and the knife in the name of science, judges the gallows in the name of justice. And still to-day life is a struggle against the difficulties and hardships which take their rise in sin and error. We are still enveloped in darkness and make escape from it our steadfast aim.

(*c*) A deeper shadow was cast upon all human hearts by the rebelliousness of sensuality. No one has ever dispelled this shadow. St. Paul groans at the strength of its power and stamps it with the weight of his apostolic authority as a misfortune, when he cries for release from 'this body of death.' Holy Scripture tells us that the world is full of the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, which are expressed in many and various ways, in pride, haughtiness and hardness of heart, in selfishness and covetousness, in immorality and sensuality. All these things are so many fetters chaining our hearts and souls, which were created for the practice of virtue, to the granite rocks of baseness and moral worthlessness. St. Paul once made use of the expression *homo terrenus*, and indeed he was justified in so doing, for it is only too true that man breathes the odour of earth and its mire.

(*d*) The darkest shadow of all those cast upon us by original sin is the shadow of death. Death is certain, and we can none of us escape it. It is the gate through which we all must pass—God's herald, whom we must all salute. Man is conscious that it is the supreme power upon earth, and that no tragedy, no catastrophe of nature can produce an impression comparable to that which is made upon us by death. '*Ave Cæsar, morituri te salutant*'—but Emperor Death differs from the Augustus in this: he never gives the signal of mercy.

Such is the truth about the multiple darkness surrounding us during our earthly Advent, which even our Saviour—Jesus Christ, the Light of the World—has not lifted from us. And yet He is still our Light in darkness. When we kneel before the Crib, we at once perceive God's love and tenderness for us; and we likewise perceive how hard and cold is our disposition, and how ardent and cordial is that of the second David. Emmanuel has come, and God is amongst us! He has not as yet admitted us to the final state of eternal happiness, but He has created for us an atmosphere of trust, love, and intimacy, and lives among the children of men as their Brother. We live in His light.

ADVENT IS THE EXPECTATION OF CHRIST

In past ages men expected Christ and longed for His Incarnation; and now we too long for Him to take shape in our souls, and expect His coming at the end of the world.

(*a*) The first Advent meant the coming of Christ according to the flesh. His Incarnation is the central fact of history, and represents God's most sublime and infinite bounty towards mankind. Before Christ came, darkness reigned over the earth. Men's hearts were icy, their souls benighted, and sin proudly reared its head aloft, for all this was its work. Through the obscurity thundered the voices of the prophets, until, when the cup of misery was filled, the darkness lifted and dawn glimmered in the sky. Hope was fulfilled and He for Whom all souls were longing came into the world. Thus dark night, with hope keeping vigil, characterizes the first Advent.

Hope such as this—prophetic, inextinguishable, never ceasing to expect eternal happiness, and in the midst of weakness dreaming of strength—is the appropriate disposition for Advent. Come then, enter my soul, thou divine virtue, that in spite of my misery and weakness I may still trust firmly and fervently in my future victory. O sweet, strong, holy hope, it is in thee that my strength lies, and to thee I will cling!

(*b*) The present Advent is also a preparation for the coming of Christ. We expect that He will come to our souls, and there take shape, and we are mindful of His coming at the Last Day. We believe in the latter, and take an active share in the former, which is the most important Advent where we are concerned, and which is characterized by many of the traits of the first Advent of all. Darkness, and cold, and spiritual death precede Christ's coming in our souls, as they did His coming upon earth; the soul that is estranged from God is sunk in heavy sleep, in the night of anxiety and fear, through which the clarion call of grace frequently resounds. This sleep of the soul is due to various causes. It may be the result of the preponderance of the animal over the spiritual in certain natures, leading to the paralysis and blindness of the soul, or of the predisposition to illusion in others, which gives vigour and alertness to self-love and self-interest, while numbing the divine element within them. We are all sleep-walkers, to a greater or a lesser degree, where supernatural life is concerned. We live and move about, it is true, but rather in a dream, as it were, with an imperfect consciousness, prejudiced and weak—and it is while we are in this state that we try to break through the barriers into the Divine life! When we glance into our own souls we are obliged to recognise how many imperfections are clinging to them—so much one-sidedness, so many faults and failings, pettinesses; hesitations and antipathies; mist, shadows, and darkness; and innumerable strayings from the beaten track as a result of unconscious thoughts. How true it is that we stand in darkness! The warnings of our conscience and the inspirations of God are the prophetic words which will awaken us from sleep and dispel the mirage glimmering before us. Lord, that we may see, may learn to know ourselves! Lighten Thou our eyes! We wish to be purified, to work at our own transformation. We no longer desire to follow the steps of our unworthy animal instincts, of self-love, of impulses and their reactions.

We will beg of God that He will enlighten us; we will consider ourselves attentively, and compare ourselves with those who are better than us, in order to imitate within ourselves that which has pleased us in them. We must not permit our souls to be weak and sickly, nor to resemble sleepwalkers. If we begin to grow conscious of our own failings in this way, we shall be aroused from our sleep, and if we set about correcting them with energy and good will, we shall have already entered the ranks of God's servants.

THE POWER OF ADVENT

Just as in nature the April sunshine and the spring breezes awake the earth from its long winter sleep, so in the spiritual world the deep, inner, genuine longing of Advent arouses souls from the torpor of sin and indifference. This yearning penetrates the soul, and stimulates an expectation and a healthy discontent which cause it to weep, to gaze up to heaven with a beating heart and parted lips, and to pray, *Rorate cœli desuper*, *excita potentiam . . . excita corda nostra*—rouse Thy power, waken our hearts! Longing such as this storms Heaven, and works upon the soul which experiences it as the plough works upon the earth, preparing it for sowing. We must endeavour to stimulate it in three ways.

(*a*) By struggling against an excess of subjectivism. This is a very widespread spiritual disease, and is to be met with under the varying forms of prejudice in judgement and prejudice in taste. We are only too easily caught in the webs of violent sympathies and antipathies. We are full of peculiar traits—pettiness, absurd touchiness, and sensibility—which all clamour for recognition. If our inner life resembles the bepatched and bepowdered rococo period, with all its artificiality, petulance, and squeamishness, we must get back to nature, back to grace, back to the genuine spirit of Advent. We will permit neither bitterness, nor over-sensibility, nor unwholesome thoughts to enter our soul, and if by any mischance they have already gained a footing there, we will go up to the hills, to the high places of the spirit, where they will perish in the rarified air. We must burst open the narrow confines of our intellectual and emotional world, and stir up the sluggish blood which is responsible for our sickly, wan views and ideas. In this way we shall prepare a path for the spirit of Advent.

(*b*) We must strive against sensuality, which may be termed the rachitis of the soul. We all suffer from it more or less; we are, nearly all of us, in danger of forgetting the spiritual content through the beauty of the external form; and the eyes of our soul are troubled and dazzled by sensuality. It is as tenacious and ineradicable as a clinging briar, and makes our souls as sickly and insipid as unfermented wine.

A high degree of self-conquest is necessary before we can count for anything in life; our souls must be braced and filled by the power and energy of Advent. We must sober our roving imagination, free ourselves from its suggestions, and refuse to allow ourselves to yield to the intoxication of the world.

(*c*) We must strive against spiritual senility. By senility I mean spiritual fatigue and inactivity. Where and in so far as our spiritual energy decreases consequently upon a natural decrease in our physical powers, we are not to blame; but physiology is not the primary factor in our spiritual life, which is essentially dependent upon the inner light, the alacrity of the will, and liveliness of response to moral stimuli. Even when the twilight of life draws on, then, the soul must still stand in the radiance of faith, and keep its emotional life perpetually fresh and youthful. We must not yield to that inertia which weighs the soul down and robs it of its clear outlook, making it dull and superficial. Our inner life must present as many contrasts as mountainous country, where hills and valleys alternate in rapid succession; and a cool breeze must constantly blow through it, that the atmosphere may remain fresh and invigorating. Above all we must preserve the flexibility of the soul, vehemence of feeling, and the spirit of initiative. The youthful soul which is truly imbued with the spirit of Advent, is full of light and gaiety, and has mastered the secret of how to be always alert, enthusiastic, and full of hope.

WHAT ADVENT SUGGESTS TO US

(*a*) *Self-examination, followed by a fresh start.*

The contemplative soul turns towards God, for it is related to Him, and is therefore impelled towards Him as a matter of course, longing to approach Him closely, to unite itself to Him, and to repose in Him. It is not discouraged by its total incapacity to understand God—it is like the flower, which cannot understand the sun, yet turns towards the light, or the root, which knows nothing of the earth and yet strikes into it.

(i) Our first sentiment where God is concerned must be one of the most profound humility. We must clasp His feet, cling to Him, and cry, ' Behold me, the work of Thy hands, at Thy feet, because Thou hast drawn me to Thyself, sweet Lord!'

(ii) We must imbue our souls with the sense of His greatness and majesty, of the sublimity of His divine thoughts and ideas, of His creative and redeeming power, and savour all these attributes of God to the best of our ability. We will take pleasure in adoring Him, prostrate in the dust at His feet. What exquisite and precious sensations will then be ours! We are permitted to gaze into His eyes, inspiration stirs in us, and our souls revive as if upon the mountain tops.

(iii) We must offer ourselves to Him as a humble sacrifice, and take counsel within ourselves as to what He, our great Lord, requires of us.

(iv) We must listen eagerly for the sound of His voice —'Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth.' In other words we must study God's thoughts, which we see shining before us in Nature, in the Gospel, and in the souls of the saints. We must examine these effects of light, and the radiance of grace and of faith, as attentively as an artist observing the glow of sunset. And then the spiritual world will reveal itself more and more fully to the eyes of our soul. We shall see that all men are brothers, that the aim of life is the service of God, that it is not blind chance which rules our existence, and that it is God's grace, and not His wrath, which surrounds us and guides us onwards. It will become clear to us that here upon earth man passes as it were, through a larval stage and that he cannot be termed free or perfect until he has burst through and emerged from the cocoon which the external world and the train of events have woven around him.

(v) We must draw nearer to God. Here the Holy Ghost will help us, and the Apostle exhorts us to this end; *implemini Spiritu Sancto.* We shall approach God with the greater certainty if we do so wholeheartedly. We firmly believe, Lord, that Thou art our perfect fulfilment, that Thou art our all, that Thou art the sunshine which is interwoven into our very tissue; and we know that even when Thou dost often appear to us, in our moments of suffering and sorrow, as supreme and majestic night, still our souls are possessed of delicate wings, and of a sense of touch which will enable them to soar to Thee through the darkness of anguish and to find Thee there in its midst.

We hope in Thee, O Lord; our souls expand and develop before Thee, and open a million pores to the light and air which Thou dost bestow, for they know that Thou bringest the spring with Thee.

We love Thee, O Lord, we love Thee, Jesus, our dear Brother, adorable Babe; we love Thy pure, sublime, divine Soul, Which is ever mindful of us, and Which lavishly dedicates to us Its precious, inestimable life.

(vi) We must imitate God, transferring to our souls the features of His eternally active and progressive life, features which arise from ever more finely developed impulses, emotions and capacity for suffering, which crystalize into an increasingly clearer self-consciousness. We must continually labour at the beautifying, expansion, and deepening of our spiritual life. Christ is its ideal, the energy which sustains it, and the sun which warms it; the Gospel, Holy Mass, the Blessed Sacrament, and God's grace and inspirations are the tools with which we are to shape it.

(*b*) *Our active life.*

(i) The soul which is truly in earnest makes its strong hand felt in its own shapeless, chaotic and sinful inner world, and takes for its watchword, 'Here order must, and shall, prevail.' By order, it understands God's holy Will, and accordingly it first sets about breaking with and banishing all the elements within itself which oppose that Will, and with stern industry it purifies its house of all sin and disorder, leaving it swept and garnished.

(ii) When the soul has in this manner restored peace and order to the noisy, turbulent fair consisting of its passions and appetites and instincts, it turns its eyes to the light of faith, for it desires to live, and not to doubt. It is a great pity when we are unconscious of the riches which we possess, and do not enjoy them, and yet this is of frequent occurrence. It has been truly said that "We philosophize too much, and live too little by the truth." The soul, then, must long for knowledge, but only in order that it may be able to love the better. It strives for hope, and for faithfulness, for it does not want a merely emotional religion, but the words of Christ, which are spirit and life. Religion is not a weathercock, responding to the breath of our changing moods and humours, but a steadfast, divinely tempered manner of thinking and living.

(iii) The soul then turns to its natural and worldly existence, and sets this in order. We must not look upon social and family life, with all that they involve in the way of duties, work, professional and business activity, the requirements of fashion, propriety, politeness and human feeling, as if they belonged to another world, which has no connection with the life of faith and the service of God; on the contrary, these too must be regulated by Christ's intentions and purposes, that is to say, they also must be incorporated into the moral order.

(iv) The soul must aim at influencing its surroundings by the medium of its newly purified disposition. It is full of light, and must pass on that light to others; it is full of heat, and must communicate warmth to others. Our faith and our principles must be transmuted into so much energy, by which we are enabled to influence those around for the better, to be of assistance to them, and to encourage them on the upward path.

ADVENT IS THE TIME OF EXPECTATION AND OF PREPARATION

The long twilight of November and December mornings, when it almost seems to us as if the day will never come, harmonizes closely with the soul's longing for its Saviour. The long delayed sunrise, followed at length by a new day, is a symbol of Advent, which, imitating the gloomy darkness of the years before Christ, is the beginning of the Church year. Accordingly, expectation, awakening, and fresh life are the characteristics of Advent. *Nox præcessit*, *dies appropinquavit*, we cry with St. Paul, night is fading, day breaking; let us awaken to strong and devout life, and hasten to Christ.

(*a*) *A time of expectation*, for Christ is drawing near. 'Blessed is the servant whom when his master cometh he shall find waiting.' Earthly life is the vigil before the appearance of the Bridegroom, Whom we hasten to meet with our lamps in our hands; it is the eve of the great Feast upon which we shall see Christ face to face. We stand as it were at the portal of a cathedral; the figures of prophets and apostles and angels look down upon us from their niches in greeting, but the door as yet remains closed. So we wait and hope, our eyes fixed upon the gate of eternal Light. . . . *Veni, Domine Jesu*—Come, Lord Jesus, come!

(*b*) *A time of preparation*, for the dear, sacred feast of grace and of gifts, the feast of Christmas. We must try to experience the longing of Advent, its excitement and hope, in all their fulness, in order to give a joyful welcome to the Baby Jesus upon His high and glorious feast, radiant with the lights of the myriad candles, and fragrant with the scent of the fir trees which adorn our homes. To this end we must carefully practise three things :—1. Penance, in order to purify our hearts. 2. Retirement. Just as nature withdraws into herself during the winter months, in order to prepare for spring, we must retire within our souls and concentrate upon increasing our keenness of perception and our strength of will. 3. The awakening of longing for supernatural life. R*orate cœli desuper*. . . . Oh Lord our God, we awaken to Thee, and we will never forget Thee.

(*c*) *And a time above all for a fresh start.* Jesus Himself urges us on to begin. His admonition falls upon our soul like the winter sunshine, which sparkles on the rimy tree-tops, and shines through the frost-starred window-panes into our room, as if inviting us to live once more. Let us often start all over again! This may sound strange, but actually it is most important. Beginnings have a vigour and an ardour all their own, they are ignorant of fatigue and disappointment, and cheerfulness is their principal characteristic. In spring, the age-old oaks and beeches always put forth fresh branches and buds as the fresh sap rises within them; they could not grow if they remained as hard and dry all the year round as they do in winter. . . . God Himself anoints our souls with the oil of joy and cheerful willingness: *propterea unxit te Deus*. . . . During Advent, therefore, we will start afresh; our task is great, and we stand but at the beginning! Let us, with St. Paul, aim at that which lies before us.

THE CRAVING OF THE SOUL FOR GOD

(*a*) The craving for life, and the longing of our hearts for a life that is more beautiful, perfect, and profound, impel us to approach God, and cause our souls to seek and watch perpetually. And this is always the case. No matter to what degree of the inner life we may have attained, we seek for yet better and deeper life, for more profound faith, for closer union with God, and for a more perfect harmony of both heart and soul. We know that we are but weak and sickly, yet we hope and wait for the angel hand to stir the waters of our devotion and our zeal, as it did many years ago in the pool of Bethsaida. Darkness still reigns in our souls; the disposition of Christ, and His noble, sacred ideas have not yet sufficiently penetrated and saturated our inner world, yet we are still full of faith that the adorable Redeemer will appear in all the splendour of His glory before our eyes, which are still dazzled by the glare of the world. Let us in this spirit give ourselves to contemplation, prayer, and meditation, and purify and discipline our conscience.

(*b*) From God alone do we expect the perfect satisfaction of our craving for joy. By joy I do not mean a will o' the wisp which dances and flickers before us for a time, only to disappear in the end, but that profound feeling which arises from purity of conscience, and with which everything upon earth which is beautiful and strong harmonizes. Our joy consists in this, that God dwells within us, that we behold His sunlight, and the rainbow with which He spans the sky, that we can pray to Him and sing Him the songs of youth and liberty. Our joy will grow in proportion as we realize that purity means life and energy. Without purity the soul resembles a desert where Death has its home.

> „ Die Wüste wächst ; wehe dem, der Wüsten birgt !
> Stein knirscht an Stein ; die Wüste schlingt und würgt.
> Der ungeheure Tod blickt glühend braun
> Und kaut ! Sein Leben ist sein Kauen.
> Vergiss nicht, Mensch, den Wollust ausgeloht,
> Der Stein bist du, die Wüste ist der Tod."

(*c*) We will arm ourselves for the struggle, for it is the expression of a truly Christian temperament to struggle and to conquer. Christians are not elegant idlers and dreamers, but a race full of energy and enthusiasm for the struggle which faces them. As long as we are upon earth, our feelings, experiences, and ideals come frequently into conflict. A great deal of prayer and meditation is necessary upon our part before we can rightly understand this, and we have to work at ourselves, in order to reconcile them. At every step we meet with contradictions between the demands of virtue and of instinct, and between those of duty and of enjoyment. These contradictions do not vanish immediately ; they do not even begin to grow less decided until we penetrate the dark places of the soul and cleanse our instincts from the earthly mire—that is to say, from the animal, sensual, purely physiological elements which, as we know only too well, largely influence our moral actions—which clings to and chokes them. We are perfectly aware that our moods and cravings are infected by violent and intensely active selfishness, so that often we have to conquer our clarity of vision all over again. May God be our arm and our strong right hand . . . *esto brachium nostrum !*

(*d*) We believe in the victory of life over death. Earthly life is but a beginning, a taking root ; the crown towards which it aspires is eternal life, which is interconnected with the former, but consists of different elements. We find an analogy to this in plant life, where the conditions of growth for the root are distinct from those which govern the development of the leaves and flowers. We believe in life everlasting! Let us remember St. Philip Neri, who, when he was informed that the Holy Father was desirous of making him a cardinal, threw his biretta into the air and cried, 'Heaven is what I need and long for, not the purple!' So may our hearts be always filled with the ineradicable consciousness of our immortality. For the sake of no one will we commit spiritual suicide by throttling this consciousness within us. We will deride and laugh at the false ways of this world and those joyless, critical spirits who see ghosts at noonday. While the soul which has faith is engaged in absorbing eternity with all the power of its thoughts and feelings, presentiments and ideals, of its longing, adoration and enthusiasm, while the rhythm of existence impels it to break forth into psalms and hymns, these poor creatures speak to us in feeble, muffled tones and have nothing better to show us than a grinning skull. This may perhaps alarm us, but it is not sufficient to turn us aside from our path. We must be alike the partisans, pilgrims, and poets of eternal life.

'IN THOSE DAYS COMETH JOHN THE BAPTIST'

(*Matt.* iii, 1.)

(*a*) It was the mission of St. John the Baptist to go forth before the Lord and to prepare the way of the Saviour. 'Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord.'

(Luke i, 76.) John was to be His angel before His face, a light to all men showing the path of the Lord. He himself is a wandering flame, born of the unapproachable fire of God, and we feel this heat glowing in his words and activity, and in his entire personality. Precursors are necessary at all times, in order to prepare the way of the Lord; and it is a thousand pities when the light of those who have been called to go before His Face burns fitfully like that of the candles surrounding a bier, or dully, like that of the lamps of some night-shelter, which struggles cheerlessly through the gloom of a foggy winter's morning. And it is sad when these messengers are as tired and dispirited as the world which they are to arouse. Let us therefore beg of God, that He will send us men full of faith, with their lamps burning in their hand, whose souls are vigilant and filled with prophetic fire, the true spirit of Pentecost, for it is only such as these who can prepare His way before Him. Before those flames can break forth from our souls which are capable of kindling others, we must ourselves burn with that interior fire which filled the martyrs, and which penetrates to every nook and cranny of our souls.

(*b*) Not only is the road-breaker provided with a lantern, he has as well an outfit of tools; a pick, to break up the flinty hearts of men, a hammer, to crush sinners, and an axe, which is laid to the root of the trees, for 'every tree . . . that doth not yield good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire.' (*Matt*. iii, 10.) He holds a fan in his hand, with which to sift the lives of men, so that the wind of decay may scatter the chaff, while the wheat is carried into the barns of the Eternal Judge. 'Do penance'—this is what resounds sternly and inexorably from the lips of the mighty prophet who prepared the way for Christ. 'I know that you are waiting for the Messias, the Lord and Shepherd of your souls, and your Model; follow me, and I will lead you by the path of penance, for this is the way of the Lord.'

(*c*) The prophet lifts his lamp and directs its blinding light, the fire of his enthusiasm and of his unshakeable faith, into our dazed and weary souls. See how before its gleaming ray all our worldly manners of thought, and the whole shadowy kingdom of our own lower, earthly nature shrivel up and fade away. 'Up,' he cries, 'rub your eyes clear of sleep, you must no longer languish on a sick bed, grasp at shadows, and chase mirages; you must not lose your souls. Now they are caught in the bonds of sin, but you must tear yourselves free, at any cost! Up, up from the swamps and the rank undergrowth, out on to the splendid paths of life!'

Let us not neglect this summons. We must examine the misery of our souls, probe our sinful pasts, and break with them. Every act of virtue, every victory over self, frees us more completely from the bonds of sin.

THE MAN OF THE DESERT

And the same John had his garment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat was locusts and wild honey. (*Matt.* iii, 4.)

(*a*) The man of the desert appears. His soul is tranquil, absolved in God; and after his long silence he prepares to speak.

Silence is precious. It is the foundation upon which beauty of soul materializes. It is easy for us to satisfy ourselves as to the truth of this axiom. If we control our tongues for but one or two days, we shall see our faith and duties and ideals in a new and wonderfully clear light. How often speech serves not merely to clothe thought, but to drive it away as well! In this holy period of Advent, then, our souls must penetrate the kingdom of Silence, that vast kingdom which stretches far beyond the waters of Styx, up above the stars, until it merges in that other kingdom where the Voice of God is heard. Here may our souls work in mysterious, sacred darkness, like bees which go diligently about their business through the dusk. Yea, speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear. It has been well said that when the lips slumber, the soul awakes. Even so are our souls awake and attentive during the silence of Advent.

(*b*) The man of the desert is austere. He is not clothed in soft garments; it is his mission to undeceive soft, pleasure-loving worldlings, and to bring them to reason. We must set about rudely shaking and then mastering our over-indulged bodies, with their pampered sensuality, or else the latter will gain the ascendancy over the soul. We must discipline the body, which has so often sinned to the detriment of the spirit of virtue, and must force it to make satisfaction to God, and to do penance. We make these individual sacrifices in order that we may offer to God, even amidst the world of our passions and instincts, one great, pleasing, and holy sacrifice—that of our entire being, both body and soul. The severity with which we carry out this intention forms the strong discipline of which we stand in need; it is not intended to grind the human element within us to powder, but by hewing and chiseling to fashion it into a masterpiece—the image of Christ.

(*c*) The speech of the man of the desert is not gentle and flattering. Rather it cuts and whips the soul like the biting winds of spring, which sweep icily over the earth on their work of purification, trying every tree, rattling every branch, and snapping off all those which have perished. To that which is decayed, they spell death; but that which possesses a shred of vitality, they brace, shuddering, to fresh life. Penance—self-denial—brood of vipers—chaff, which will be cast into the fire—hard truths, everyone of them, which apply to us all, individually, and which we must accept with humility. Not a vestige of self-deception can subsist before them, the veils are torn from our eyes, and we see our souls as they really are, in all their wretchedness and pride and weakness. We shudder, but with a wholesome fear, and at the same time we are imbued with fresh vital energy. And let us remember how the Baptist describes himself—'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. . . . I am not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoe. . . .' Truly these are depths from which we can draw a wealth of energy and powerful feeling.

'DO PENANCE: FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.' (*Matt*. iii, 2.)

We have to repent our sins, and we have to do penance; such is the message of the opening chapters of the Gospel.

(*a*) Repentance is man's lasting portion. It accompanies him like a shadow. All attempts at ridding him of his dark fellow-traveller, and at robbing repentance of the place which it has held in religion from times immemorial, while replacing it with the untroubled conscience of the ‘ Superman,’ are doomed to failure. He who has once lifted his eyes to heaven and there perceived the glory of infinite strength and beauty, finds that his tears will flow easily enough at the spectacle of himself and his sinfulness. This perception arouses both the impulse to repent of sin, which takes its rise in the functioning of the free and noble will, and the realization of the duty of repentance. The tears of sorrow are a sweet obligation upon us.

(*b*) Repentance cannot be banished from the world. Just as it is impossible to stifle the voice which inexorably distinguishes between good and evil in the profound depths of the human soul, just as it is equally impossible to reconcile the contradiction existing between virtue and sin, or to reckon the value of the moral law and of spiritual ideas in pounds and ounces ; so it is impossible to seal up the source of repentance, and to dry the tears which it sheds. We shall never cease to weep while sin remains upon earth, while we still suffer defeat and yet are conscious of the impulse towards freedom, and while disillusion follows frenzy. The tears of repentance are an integral part of our freedom and of our struggles.

(*c*) In the moral order there exists a primary antagonism between the sense of duty and the craving for forbidden pleasure. The defeat of the former we term sin. The human will is free to follow the invitation of the craving for pleasure, but when it has sinned, conscience pricks it ; and then the soul becomes clearly aware that it has sinned, and confesses its shame and defeat. It realizes that the Divine justice is immoveable, and that sin has lured it from the straight path of moral obligation to its own destruction. It knows full well that virtue is a reflection of the eternal holiness of God, which enobles it and gives it its true worth, while all deviations from the good constitute its own degradation and abasement. As a result of these remonstrances of conscience, a flash of perception pierces the dense clouds which surround the soul, enabling it to understand where and why it has sinned, to turn away from the sins which it has recognised, and to turn instead to what is good and beautiful. It stands before God in sorrow and humility, filled with horror at the evil which it has committed, and with longing to make reparation, to re-establish the order which it has subverted. It is now in a position to estimate virtue at its true value, and since it can no longer lay claim to the roses of first love and the lilies of innocence, it twines itself a wreath of the autumn flowers of suffering and of sorrow. Has not the modern world aptly chosen the chrisanthemum as the emblem of its melancholy temper? We must not attempt to stem the tears which men shed over their sins. Repentance is an obligation which conscience lays upon them.

'BRING FORTH THEREFORE FRUIT WORTHY OF PENANCE' (*Matt.* iii, 8.)

(*a*) The primary consideration where this is concerned is deep and genuine contrition, which is perfected in us by frequent confession. Often at the beginning of our conversion or amendment we have but a confused consciousness of our sins, and it is only later that we are able to perceive more exactly both their number and heinousness. As the keenness of this perception increases, so does the deepness of our repentance. At first we grieve about our sins in general, later we bewail them in detail. If only we could do so as bitterly as possible! It was only Jesus Who saw the full extent and detail of all our wickedness, when He sweated blood in the Garden of Olives. The precious drops which He shed sank into the earth and were absolved, but the remembrance of our sins was not dispelled, and they will be held up before us at the Day of Judgement. The greater the distance which we set between ourselves and our sins, the greater grows our contrition for them. It is a strange thing to say, but it is nevertheless true, that repentance is a great consolation. This is because genuine contrition, to a certain extent, puts a stop to that which has occasioned it.

(*b*) By frequent confession we increase grace, and grace softens the soul, just as retting softens hemp, rendering it pliant and flexible. Sensitiveness is essential to repentance. Those who possess it are better able to repent of small sins, than others, who lack it, of great ones. The quality of our contrition depends upon the amount of grace which we possess. The contrition of the saints is greatest, since they possess the most grace. Where we are concerned, great sorrow does not come all at once, but rather by degrees. In the early stages of conversion sensitiveness is usually coarse and blunted, for the soul is as yet cold and frozen. Then gradually the warmth of grace melts the soul, bringing with it increased fineness of perception, which enables us to recognise ourselves for the great sinners which we are. This clearness of perception, where the enormity of sin is concerned, is an effect of grace, which, as we have already seen, is to be observed particularly in the saints. St. Clare considered that her soul resembled one sick of the plague, and St. Francis Borgia could not even find a place in hell that was not too good for his deserts. As contrition depends upon grace, which is imparted to us by the Sacrament of Penance, it is the latter which will perfect our contrition. Especially does this Sacrament strengthen our conviction and certainty that Our Lord died for our sakes while we were yet sinners, and that therefore He already loved us while we were numbered among His enemies. 'God so loved the world . . .' This is the essence of His love, that He loved us first. We must follow the traces of life and of spiritual sensitiveness, for when this is lacking, the progress of repentance is checked. The soul of the savage, and the soul of the insensitive man, is merely impressed by what is awe-inspiring in nature, by storms, hurricanes, thunder; the depth of the love and the wisdom which have been lavished upon creation does not touch him. The same thing applies to the souls which pursue purely earthly interests. Only death, judgement, hell and predestination can stir them; they are incapable of penetrating to the heart of grace, and the mysteries of prayer, the treasures contained in the use of indulgences, leave them unperturbed. It is only the thunder of judgement which will arouse the indifferent and the inattentive; while the alert and wakeful are conscious even of the humming of summer insects amid the foliage which surrounds them.

(*c*) The growth of our resemblance to Christ keeps pace with our increase in grace, and we identify ourselves even more closely with Our Lord's feelings. His sufferings go to our hearts and are the mainspring of our sorrow. How moving, for instance, is the thought of His thorn-crowned Head! We shudder to the depths of our being and cannot tear ourselves away from His glance, never forget Him. We repent of our sins solely because of His bloody sweat, His five sacred Wounds, His defiled Countenance, and the anguish of His Sacred Heart. We remember the words, 'the day long I have spread out my hands to a people that believeth not and contradicteth me . . . for they rebuked me, as the Lord said in the day of his anger.' Sorrow like this continues to grow as long as life lasts. Such was the repentance of St. Paul, who called himself the chief of sinners, of Magdalen in the house of the Pharisee, of Saint Angela of Foligno, who at one time, out of false shame, concealed sins in confession, until her heart was melted in the flames of the thorn-crowned love of Jesus. Yes, we must love God! That is to say, we must love Him in a practical manner, by hating sin, hastening to confess it, cultivating a lively sense of the relief which confession brings, and above all by longing ardently for a purer disposition and purer feelings.

'DO PENANCE'

(*a*) Repentance is the fruit of conversion and of self-examination. If we look into ourselves we shall find God. His being is reflected in the human soul. Our longing for eternal life corresponds to His immortality, the limitless sweep of thought to His infiniteness, the freedom of the will to His omnipotence, the emotions to His love, the voice of conscience to His holiness, the sentiments of the pure heart to His joy, noble readiness for sacrifice to His perfection, and tranquillity of soul to His peace. How sweet it is to be with Him and to enjoy Him! And the only way in which the soul truly be raised and dignified is by working at the intensification and balancing of these divine characteristics. That is why God bids us look into ourselves, and Christian asceticism translates this by 'Organize and regulate your spiritual life'; that is to say, possess your souls. Sensual impressions must not be allowed to disturb them, nor emotions and passions to confuse them, nor cravings and impulses to lower them, and the whole being must proceed from unity and the love of God, towards unity and the love of God. With this in view, he who desires to save his soul and to practise virtue must carry out within himself a triple work of unification.

(*b*) Unification of the life of the senses. Ideas, knowledge and art all depend upon the wealth of our sensual impressions, for the latter form the foundation of spiritual perception and of the intellectual world. The kingdom of the senses—colour, sound, taste, smell and touch—is as inexhaustible as the waves of the ocean, as manifold as the glowing tints of sunset, and ensnares the soul only too easily. We must not allow ourselves to be confused by the showy glitter of sensual impressions, and must merely use them as necessity dictates, not more, remembering that the world of the senses is like a stormy sea, upon which we cannot trust ourselves without a compass, a bewitching spectacle, the fascination of which our spirit must penetrate and master, a field which is watered by the stream of life, but which needs the right seed if it is to be productive. Let us refrain from everything which appears to be most insinuatingly and dangerously sweet, let us be unpretentious in our whole manner of life, eat and dress simply, and, when necessary, completely break with the life of the senses. The sweetness of spiritual life will richly compensate us for such a sacrifice.

(*c*) Unification of endeavour. Life is so full of cross-currents that the soul is in danger of being caught in them and dashed against the rocks, unless the many wants are dominated by the one will, which brings unity into the diverse strivings. 'What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world . . . ?' This forcible saying reminds us that we must seek for nothing but the accomplishment of God's Will and the salvation of our souls. We must cry willingly, and from the bottom of our hearts, *unam petii a Domino*, one thing we have sought from the Lord, one thing we desire upon earth to live near Him, to know Him, to cling to Him. This will set the right goal before all our labour and striving.

It is men like this that we sorely need, great in mind, strong in hope, zealous in their work, who check and suppress every tendency, endeavour, and desire which are opposed to their one great aim. Let us even be mindful of the fact that we are living for the sake of eternity.

(*d*) Unification of the practical activity of the intellect and the will, in order that it may be directed towards the actual knowledge and love of God; and this not merely by means of a general leaning and habitual disposition, but by constant remembrance and the actual directing of our emotions towards God. 'Martha, Martha,' says Christ to every soul which is troubled about too many things, 'thy thoughts and feelings are so manifold, that thou art torn and distracted within thy soul. Search thy heart, and rest awhile in God, then with a pure and clear consciousness bring thy feelings and desires and sensations into unison, that they may become subject to the will, bring thy strivings into unison by directing them towards God, and thy cares and anxieties by supporting them with hope. And bring thy love into unison, for "What have I in heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?"' Let us, then, often think lovingly of God.

'FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND'

(*Matt.* iii, 2.)

The kingdom of heaven is constructed on a vast scale, corresponding to the immeasurable greatness of its Architect.

(*a*) His first work is the beautiful, rich, and profound world of nature. Contact with it fertilizes our souls and minds, and from this seed develop science and art and the Faculty of enjoyment. Man utilizes the powers of nature and endeavours to master them; yet at the same time he cannot rid himself of the feeling that his inner and his moral world cannot be exclusively constructed upon a natural foundation, and that nature is in many respects cold and unfamiliar in comparison with human feelings. This should not however trouble us, since we must develop, strengthen, and enjoy our natural capabilities according to the Divine conception, and base both art and culture upon nature. At the same time we are aware that God has created nature, maintaining it in existence through a continual action of His Will, and that all human life is also derived from Him. We can say that we have our roots in Him, and that all existence is divine, in the sense that it springs from God. It is therefore the wrong type of reverence which impels us to keep at a distance from God, and which does not rightly understand the mystery of the depth and closeness of the connection which exists between God and the soul. Let us then rejoice that our existence continually springs from God, and cultivate within ourselves the strength, reverence and joy which the realization of our origin entails.

(*b*) His second work is that of grace, that is to say, God's intercourse with humanity in the quality of its Lord, Father, and Master. By grace God leads us to the heights of knowledge and love of Himself, He reveals Himself to us and desires to dwell among us. In the kingdom of grace, too, there are countless varying grades, and it affects sensitive and indifferent souls in different ways. It is our task to intensify our personal union with God, to construct the home which He desires, a home bounded not by stone walls, but by the human soul and its emanations. God lives amid the love, the confidence, the tranquillity, the attentiveness of our souls; the soul is the city of His kingdom, in which we feel ourselves close to Him. Grace is the spirit of this home, and therefore we must prize it highly, and strive to keep our lives free from mortal sin, in order to preserve it.

(*c*) His third work is His Son, and the fashioning of His Son's likeness in men's souls. This work is the sole permanent revelation of His Divinity, a new world which infinitely surpasses the domains of nature, civilization, and the Old Law, and brings with it a sublime, divine life to which none other can be compared. In the Old Testament we find many types of Christ which command our reverence, but what are they in comparison with Christ Himself? And then what a new horizon opens before us at the thought of imitating Him, of following in His footsteps! The imitation of Christ becomes the leading instinct, the very disposition of the Christian soul; the thought of it steadily grows in extent and in power, until it becomes the one great reality; Christ's Will alone weighs with the soul, and His voice alone resounds in its ear, making all else appear petty and insignificant. So it was with the prophets, who saw God, with the apostles, who spoke of Him, and with the martyrs, who gave up everything for Him. And is it not strange that we, who know Him, do not live, feel, and think in this way too?

THE LORD OF THE KINGDOM

(*a*) Holy Scripture is rich in metaphors where earthly life is concerned, calling it a flower, or a dream, and then again vanity, or military service. Yet amid all this diversity of comparison it still markedly stresses two aspects of human existence. The first is its dependence upon a higher power, and the second the unshakeable confidence which must characterize this dependence. The twofold capacity of God as the Lord, the *Dominus*, of the human race, and its Saviour, *Salvator*, corresponds to the two aspects already mentioned. Primarily He is Lord. To Him belongs all power, He is the Ruler, the Infinite, eternal, unfathomable, spiritual, personal Truth. These conceptions of ours are but clumsy, more full of darkness than of light; but the heart is our guide in the darkness, for it is more capable of leading the soul instinctively towards God than is reason. It is true that we cannot see His countenance, but we are aware of His presence, because there we find tranquillity. God is the mighty Ruler, Whose power none can escape, to Whom all men and all things pay homage, if only by the fact of their mortality, for it is God alone Whose Being remains ever young and everlasting. Babylon becomes a desert, earth itself is gradually cooling down, while everything upon it falls into decay. Iron rusts, granite becomes powder, the mighty oak rots, beauty ends in toothless age, intelligence in second childhood. . . . Truly nothing can compare to the worship of our great Master. Love and praise of Him are the end of creation at the time of its flowering and its splendour, and not less so when the blossom is dead and the power has faded; but then rejoicing is replaced by profoundest adoration, by the homage of that which is transitory to that which is Eternal. Let us adore God in this way, and praise Him in life as in death—*Domine Deus*, *rex cælestis*. . . .

(*b*) This Lord it is our business to serve. In those who grasp to a certain infinitesimal degree what is meant by the Infinite the instinct of absolute service will awaken. The Psalmist begs for this great favour and calls it his greatest consolation. ' I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies.' ' I love thy commandments above gold and topaz.' And in the Book of Wisdom we read, ' And I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her.' (*Wisd.* vii, 8.) This was echoed by St. Agatha, the Greek martyr, who suffered in Catania, when she told the prætor, 'True nobility consists in serving Christ. In His service therefore lies my glory, my joy, and my strength.'

(*c*) God is our guide through a maze of contradictions, and when we drop the thread of His holy Will, life immediately becomes dark and impenetrable. Without Its guidance we cannot cope with the struggles and sufferings of existence, nor bring order and harmony into the maddening, soul-deadening chaos which we call human life. It is the victorious, organizing activity of the Divine Will, the Will of our Ruler and our Lord, which alone can save us. We must learn what It requires and faithfully abide by It in all the circumstances of life, wherever It may lead us. We are God's servants, and must be ready if necessary to sacrifice ourselves at His pleasure.

(*d*) The mighty and in many respects incomprehensible majesty of God stoops to save us and to make us happy. He has fashioned our hearts and our instincts, has revealed His ideas to us in Creation, and leaves His tracks for us to see and follow in truth, beauty, joy, and force. It is He Who fills our innermost being with joy, Who surrounds us with sunshine and causes flowers to blossom on our path. He is our goal and our resting place, our path and our help on the road. The path varies for each individual; for one it is health, for another sickness; for one riches, for another poverty; a short but glorious career for some, or again the bitterness of long years of renunciation and sacrifice for others. All these are His ways, and it is possible for us to be happy in any one of them, if we possess these three treasures: God Himself, to light us on our road; Christ, to be our ideal and our source of life; God as our Friend and Bridegroom, so that we can say, 'I have found Him Whom my soul loveth,' and find our rest and tranquillity in Him.

'THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND'

(*Matt.* iii, 2.)

(*a*) The kingdom of heaven consists of real, confident, and loving union with God, in the cleaving of our souls to Him and their rest in Him. We have to assert this fact and convince ourselves of it in the face of everything which threatens to trouble, oppress, or overwhelm us. At times we waver and lose heart, the thought of the world bears down on us like some great tidal wave, and doubt overwhelms us, doubt which prompts the question if, after all, life ends in nothing. We are so small and so feeble that we are easily swept away. How can we face the situation? By not being afraid to affirm, Jesus Himself has assured us that the kingdom of Heaven exists, and that we have a Father there. His Face is hidden from us, we know, but we also know that It is no Gorgon's head. Our Lord has also told us that the soul of each one of us is worth more than the whole world together. This should awaken in us the realization of our own high dignity. And Jesus did not merely set this truth before us; He exemplified it in His own life.

(*b*) We see His Soul shining out from the Gospel narrative, radiant with the glory of Its dignity, transfigured by the love of God. Light and joy characterize this Soul in a special manner, and the Christmas song of the angels applies directly to It, for It is the most perfect expression of the 'peace to men of good-will.' In the Son of Man God has shown us what this good will means; He has set before our eyes the will that is faithful, loving, truly good, and which never loses its balance or its tranquillity. A will such as this is superior to all evil; it is like the seagull, which floats lightly on the crests of the waves, or the sparrow, which perches fearlessly on a rotting twig, because it has no fear of the mortality and fluctuation of earthly things. It makes strength conscious of itself and teaches us to smile amid all our trials and difficulties. This good will begets those heroic souls which are able to preserve their innocence and dignity amid all circumstances and surroundings.

(*c*) The consciousness of our own dignity is the logical consequence of the love of God. Those who call God 'Father' must feel that they are related to the Infinite and consider themselves as Its children. And with what dignity this consciousness will invest us, since both the quality of our spiritual worth, and the energy which the latter generates, are determined to a great extent by our opinion of them, and by the strength of our supernatural motives. He who fosters a sense of his royal—we may even say of his divine—status in the spiritual order, is sure of victory, because he judges all things by a standard beside which everything earthly and temporal dwindles into insignificance. Human institutions play a subordinate rôle. Greater than science and the state and kinship is the human soul, to which, and to its activity as well, the consciousness of Divine kinship gives an incomparable value. The Gospel states and insists upon this fact and applies it to every human life, whether that life is passed in ruling a state or driving a plough.

We are all required to live as God's children, and to regulate our lives in accordance with the obligations which this involves. The Gospel does not dispense us from the economic necessity of labour, or from social relations; it reverences the constituted authority, proclaims marriage a sacrament, thus sanctifying love, obliges us to work, and does not bid us flee to the desert before we can attain salvation. It takes men and life as they come, but it has brought upon earth the new leaven that is the sublime consciousness of our kinship with God.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD UPON EARTH

The kingdom of God does not reside exclusively in our inner selves; it is also intended to spread through the world, through public institutions, and through society. The benefits which it brings in its train consist of greater truth, greater goodness, and greater happiness. We all have good reason to pray for and to assist in its further spread upon earth and in social relations everywhere.

(*a*) The kingdom of God must above all expand to a greater extent in all directions. At certain periods only an infinitesimal degree of truth, goodness and beauty penetrates to the broad lower strata of society. Then comes the moment when they are stirred, and become conscious of the longing for organized moral and social existence, when the thirst for culture and enlightenment awakens, and the education of the masses becomes a question of paramount and world-wide interest.

'All shall know me' runs a prophecy of Jeremias (*Jer.* xxxi, 34), and Our Lord says, 'the blind see, the lame walk. . . .' When therefore we see His light and walk according to it, when we triumph over the evil which distresses and chafes us, then we shall experience His coming, and He will abide with us. It is this Advent for which the Church is working all over the world, which is the aim of the saints, of schools, of missions, and of the true education of the people. This universal sighing and longing for a better age, the conviction and confidence that it is near, can hardly fail to realize it. Still to-day the peoples are saying, 'Come, let us go up the mountain of the Lord and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' We must see that all these diverse strivings are everywhere directed towards Christ, and that the instinctive yearning is directed into the channels of faith.

(*b*) These Advent-like strivings of the nations towards the betterment of the world will only succeed in spreading happiness, if they are more than superficial, and penetrate men's souls, spiritualizing, kindling, and inspiring them, while setting them on the road to perfection. All the gifts which Christ brought upon earth are at our disposal in the attainment of this object, we have only to take possession of them, and to make them truly ours by experiencing them. In this way the joy of Christmas, the faith of the woman with the issue of blood, and the repentance of Magdalen will all become our property; we must press Jesus to our hearts like Simeon, celebrate Easter and Pentecost with the Apostles, and know and love our fellowmen as our brothers. The germinating, developing warmth of our longings and strivings form another Advent, of which it has been said that the very spectacle which it offers is sufficient to convince us of the ultimate triumph over the world of that which it will bring forth. We must not doubt, then, but struggle onwards with confidence, we must aim at that enlightened obedience which always recognizes and accomplishes the will of God, and at that interior life which experiences in its tranquil depths the life of Christ. We must work at fashioning our lives in beauty, in simplicity, at raising our souls above little daily anxieties and troubles and petty gossip, at stimulating our responsiveness to God's inspirations, and at fostering the sense of our social obligations where our fellow men are concerned. Come, Lord Jesus, and be born anew in our hearts.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM IN US

(*a*) Man has been placed in the world in order that he may develop and expand his talents and capacities to their fullest extent. If he is to do so, he needs four things—knowledge, art and technical skill, morality, and religion, for truth must be known, beauty fashioned, good practised, and God feared and loved. The four things which help man to these ends are the seraph's wings of the soul, and when they are combined they play an important part in developing and enriching the life of the soul. They must not be torn asunder nor isolated, for by so doing life is maimed, or at very least paralysed. We must amalgamate these great forces. Far from the combination of art and morality with the most profound religious feeling presenting any difficulty, it is precisely this combination or union which will form the source of their fertility and energy. Art in general, and poetry in particular, will find in this alliance the unfathomable depths which are the dwelling place of truth and beauty, whence it will bear away light and fire. On the other hand, morality, which arrives at the bright light of ideals, and the sources of moral good and the moral law by way of the sense of duty and of responsibility, will derive from religion its most truly touching motives and the impulse to selfless activity.

All the mental gifts which we possess are so many treasures which God has bestowed upon us, for the purpose of making life stronger and better. The achievements of engineering abolish many dangers and help to avert others; hygiene prevents the spread of epidemics, the improvement of communications diminishes the chances of famine. All this forms part of God's plan; His Providence does not exclude the idea of human foresight and solicitude, it includes it. Let us beg of Him that He will steep our activity in His light and His beauty, and that His divine energy and power may find expression in the strength of our exertions. Our forefathers profoundly distrusted the spirit of progress, which to them savoured of the rebelliousness of Prometheus. We have outgrown this attitude; to us, each stage of progress yields a deeper understanding of the Divine idea, and is perfectly reconcilable with love and faith. In earlier ages, men were too narrow fully to appreciate the greatness and power of human reason, and easily tended to view its development as involving the idea of unbridled freedom. We know better. We want to free ourselves but only from subjection to ignorance and wretchedness not from Thee, O God! Freed from Thee, to whom or to what can we turn? To the torments of Prometheus; to the sensation that we are helpless cogs on the great wheel of world machinery; to the consciousness of incomprehensible slavery; to the torture of the mysterious, inexplicable anguish of the heart and of the raging terror engendered by spiritual void and emptiness. . . . If joy, beauty and harmony are the characteristics of creation, they cannot be lacking in the crown of creation, in human consciousness. Nor will they be lacking in any creature who turns to God in faith and love, submitting to Him reverently and profoundly. Thus will we do, Lord!

(*b*) The instinctive craving for a pure and religious life is an exceedingly powerful and important factor in the human soul, and sweeps irresistibly through the course of history like a broad and mighty current. No power has ever succeeded in stemming it, in spite of the fact that titanic, and even diabolic forces were called upon to assist in the attempt. Religious people have been burnt at the stake, branded with the stigma of inferiority, attacked with the weapons of criticism and contempt—and all in vain. We are amazed at the blindness of the many philosophers and at the mediocrity of the scholars who have failed to grasp the essentially invincible character of the religious principle. It is true that at times it is accompanied by darkness and error, but that is because it lays hold of the problem of life by its deepest root, and cannot avoid being influenced to a certain extent by the human passions and feelings which it has thereby aroused. Religion does not consist of a feeling of love, or of fear, or of sweetness alone, but of all three acting in combination with the heart and mind to discover the eternal, endless relations existing between being and life.

Religion is not intended to be discovered, but to be contemplated by the heart which God has inspired. And so, Lord, we cannot escape Thee, nor withdraw our souls from Thy embrace. Waken us by Thy grace from our fevered dreams, that we may turn to Thee in faith and love and pray, 'O, God our Father, because Thou dost love us and because Thou hast created us, be Thou our Guide; lead us to Thee that we may find our rest in Thee.'

(*c*) We must therefore raise our religious life to the same standard as our intellectual life, that is to say we must cultivate it intensively, and at the same time fashion and shape it even more profoundly, inwardly, and deliberately. If we neglect our religious life, and merely leave it at the stage of spiritual childhood, we shall be acting unreasonably, because our spiritual life will then be one-sided. It may appear cultivated to the world, but in its hidden depths it will be neglected, and since the sources of deep feeling and emotion dry up when they do not receive attention, our lives will become arid and lacking in energy. Culture cannot help us then; of itself it is unable to raise up and satisfy the higher man, because it has not the power of infusing harmony and confidence into existence. The contrary is the case. There where culture is present alone, it brings scepticism and joylessness in its train.

Let us not sin against our nature; we must develop our talents in every direction, while following the most profound and imperative urge of our being, the craving for God. We can rest assured that any aim is superficial which is willing to pay for the treasures of knowledge by the loss of the heart. And it is not more true to say that ‘the heart is the only real substitute for genius.’ The primary and indispensable factor of all sublimity and sweetness in the spiritual life can never be termed a substitute, no matter how great the genius in question may be. What is the use of genius, if it has no heart? I will even go further, and assert that without heart no genius can exist.

‘LET YOUR MODESTY BE KNOWN TO ALL MEN’

Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh. (*Phil.* iv, 5.) The idea of the Apostle runs more or less like this :—Brethren, your joyful faith and confident hope must be manifest to men ; you must live as do those who have seen the rising of the star of peace and of joy, who are conscious that God is near. Be modest in your clothing and your bearing, yet at the same time be noble and dignified, for you are strangers here, visitors in the poor house that is the world. Be satisfied with little, the little which suffices, do not give way to excitement or anger, for you are already on your way. A lofty moderation should distinguish you in all things, for modesty becomes every truly Christian soul, who can contemplate the greatness of existence. The same thing applies to beauty ; it is always modest, because it is measured, harmonious, chaste, remote from all that is shrill, gaudy, and showy. In this respect the chaste and modest soul resembles its artistic fellow, because it possesses the beauty born of measure and moderation. We can acquire true modesty by :

(*a*) *Faith*, which makes us aware of the limitations of our existence, and shows us the contrast between our life and infinity. Against the background of infinity the soul appears like a tiny star in the evening sky, or a lotus blossom floating on the boundless surface of the ocean. The narrow range of human reason becomes apparent upon reflection, and our longing for light shows that we are in darkness. And in the darkness we are obliged to be tranquil and modest and restrained, like the blind, and night, and the birds, which end their song as evening falls. Finally, faith reveals to us the modesty of Christ and of the saints. O God, enlighten our souls that we may see, and seeing, remain modest and humble always.

(*b*) *The moral order*, which shows up human hurts and weaknesses, does not tolerate the presence of ruffling and pose. Morality passes through the world in patched garments; it is retiring; it knows that storms will rage, around and above it, and therefore loads its low roof with heavy boulders, as Alpine dwellers protect their chalets against the furious winds of winter. All this makes for modesty. How modest should we be when we contemplate our own weakness, and the distance which separates us from our ideal!

(*c*) *The contemplation of our limited existence.* Much suffering and sorrow surround us; we live in a vale of tears, in spite of the achievements of the intellect; and these circumstances should conduce to the growth of modesty in us. We must follow in the footsteps of mercy and take compassion upon the weak and unhappy, and this as well will teach us modesty. A queen forgets her royal dignity, when she holds her baby in her arms, and becomes a woman and a mother like any of her sisters.

If we gather together and succour the innumerable children of God who are in a state of wretchedness and misery here below, and practise toleration and kindly feeling for our fellows, we shall not be troubled by pretensions and conceit. Modesty will then become apparent in us in the shape of sound feeling and a sense of duty.

'YE BROOD OF VIPERS' (I)

And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them : Ye brood of vipers. (*Matt.* iii, 7.) The former represented the aristocracy of learning, the latter that of birth and of money ; but St. John calls them all without distinction a generation of vipers, of degenerate minds. This warns us that we must protect ourselves from all intellectual influences which are either evil or in any way injurious.

(*a*) Wavering and sceptical people, who cannot see that which is great because they are continually stopping short before that which is petty and insignificant, cannot fashion life in strength. Scepticism is as it were a nervous disease of the intellect, which makes it incapable of carrying out this great work. He who is capable of giving way to doubt when he contemplates the beauty and strength of being, is capable of forgetting the greatest thing of all—the fact that he has to live. On the other hand, the man who has faith is able to penetrate to the profoundest depths of life, because faith shows him God's infinite condescension, creative power, and redeeming love, as manifested in His creation and redemption of each one of us, and in His continual Presence among us in the Holy Eucharist. Such are the immeasurable depths to which faith directs our gaze ; and in so doing it not only serves as the foundation of a happy existence, but as the lever which raises us to the contemplation of God and to kinship with Him. We become like Him while we contemplate Him. The promise that 'your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods,' is literally fulfilled by faith, which opens up eternal life to us. We will believe, then, in order that we may possess this life, and we believe even now, since it has already begun within us.

(*b*) We must avoid all forms of decadence, all corruption and decay, all vulgarity, distrustfulness, weak acquiescence, and everything against which the conscience enlightened by the Divine inspiration protests. It is only by observing this condition that we can be strong in mind and soul. We derive the necessary strength to carry this out from the life of faith, which at the same time fills us with enthusiasm for Christlike purity of morals. Faith in Jesus Christ is not weakness, but strength, and those who desire faith because of their own weakness merely manifest their ignorance of Christ and of that for which He stands. Religion is not supplementary strength, nor is it a substitute for strength. It is in itself the force by which we are freed from the trammels of our lower nature, and it is the source from which fresh forces—confidence, gratitude towards God, humility, love—are derived. By faith we are enabled to recognise our own weakness, and at the same time we learn how strong it will make us. This knowledge produces as it were a holy consciousness of impending triumph, which gives us both joy and pleasure. Religion teaches us to pray joyously and with satisfaction to ourselves, and gives us an inexpressible assurance that God will hear all our prayers and entreaties, that He will come to our souls and inspire them with His Spirit, as He has promised. Through this Divine intimacy the face of the earth is changed for us, and we see everything in a new light—flowers and trees and clouds, and life's dusty ways with all its sufferings and temptations. Our souls hunger for form, for a higher and fairer form of life, for beauty and moral perfection, in which they have learnt to perceive and to love God, Who guides souls, fashions them, and gives them happiness.

Come, O Holy Ghost and Creator, come and breathe Thy spirit of life and of beauty into worldly, sensual, sickly man, transform him utterly, pluck him from the midst of his narrow, petty intellectual existence, from the stupid insignificance of his daily life, and teach him instead to live after the pattern of Christ !

'YE BROOD OF VIPERS' (II)

And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them : Ye brood of vipers. (*Matt.* iii, 7.)

(*a*) The mind of the modern man is poisoned. He can no longer believe strongly. The Reformation undermined the unity of Western Christianity, and in its tracks hundreds and hundreds of religious sects sprang up. It awakened those critical minds which succeeded in turning the cultured classes against historical Christianity. We must not allow ourselves to be led astray by this fact. The way, the truth and the life are still unaltered, and still lead us by the same path as formerly to God. Even denial is not new, but has existed from distant ages; it is merely its external form which is subject to change, we might even say to the vagaries of fashion. Fundamentally however it is still based upon the same anguish and absurdity as of old, upon the sorry proclamation 'There is no God.' And yet we still see and feel Him, and bear an infinite world within ourselves, with self-consciousness and the indivisibility of self for its axle, which enable us to rise superior to matter, to time, and to space, and to dominate the world below with the glance of undivided contemplation. Why is it that man feels himself irked by the narrow confines of the earth upon which he dwells, and cannot free himself from the sensation that he is a stranger there, different from, and greater than, his surroundings? It is because this is the truth. Why linger around continual questionings as to who we are, and what we are, when we are filled with immortality and eternity, that is to say, with spirit? Let us worship God while He dwells in the depths of our souls, as the First Cause, the Support, and the End of all existence; we must hasten towards Him, and long for Him, for He awaits us and we cannot do without Him.

(*b*) Our life is passed in the world, and is one of the ripples in the great stream of history, which bears along with it the treasures of divine grace. Here, too, God draws near to us; and when we have once found Him within ourselves, we shall also find Him in the life of humanity, expanding, ennobling, and raising our religious life. If we step away from ourselves into the world, we shall find Him in the person of Jesus Christ, in Whom

He came to us, appearing with Divine power, and drawing followers to Himself who lived and died for Him. Let us remember those whom He gathered around Him on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and called to follow Him, and those later disciples who suffered in the gardens of Nero's palace as living torches—all these have borne testimony to His words, 'I have overcome the world,' and in so doing have founded the gentle, humble dominion of Christianity. For they not only recognized in Him the Teacher of Nazareth, but God made Man, belonging not to the past alone, but to an ever actual present, and always telling us: 'I give you strength, and have brought you faith, hope, virtue, ideals and devotion. . . .' What intense love we should bear Him!

(*c*) Faith needs practical activity. Historical Christianity points the way to the Gospel and to tradition, where we tap the source of Christlike life and cull its most glorious motives. Next there opens to us the Christian community, which bears this life within itself. This is the amalgamation and grouping of souls under the leadership of the Church, as ordained by Christ, in order that He, the Saviour of the Gospels, may be revealed to the innumerable souls which compose the body as a whole, through the medium of the Church's teaching. Therefore both the Gospel and the Church are equally necessary, and we have to experience the former within the bounds of the latter's teaching. Religion, like everything else human, from the simplest to the most sublime, is socially constituted, arranged for the majority. The Catholic Church is based upon the command that, in the plan which God has ordained, the wills of all men must be united in their efforts towards, and in their possession of true life, in order that the treasures belonging to this spiritual community may both save them and be regarded by them as the indispensable sources of all religious life. The first of these treasures is the presence of the Holy Ghost within the Church, the Great Source of ever fresh spiritual life; then comes the spirit of the Saints, and the inspired devotion which breathes in their hymns and writings. We must seek for Jesus, and truth, and life, not merely in our own intuition and enlightened understanding, but in the Church's past; our souls must be closely and vitally united with the saints, and with the community of the saints. The more profoundly our inner life is formed, the more harmoniously will it adjust itself to the external ties which bind the community together. It is absolutely essential that religion, which represents all that is most profound and sublime in man's nature, should be organized upon a social and historical basis. Accordingly we desire to believe and to live in the Church, not merely to observe her laws and rites, but to enjoy the fulness of her inner life as well. This will render obedience to her authority both easy and agreeable.

(*d*) We must learn to distinguish the transitory forms which develop in the course of different ages from the substance, the chaff from the wheat. We must not allow ourselves to be scandalized by any changes which the Church may have made in a few rites and customs, but must instead concentrate upon the ideas of Christ, and permeate all our culture with His grace. Without God our moral system is alike harsh and chaotic; but the Divine appears to us in its most awe-inspiring form in the person of Christ, Who puts life before us in most adorable beauty, while opening up a further perspective of progress and triumph. Should we therefore desert Him, on account of the sins and errors which some of His followers committed in past ages? Let us by all means rejoice that we have left those weaknesses behind, but do not let us discard the treasures of tradition. We may develop and expand our conceptions, but this expansion does not constitute a disavowal of the past, any more than the dropping of shrivelled leaves by plants injures them. It is simply a condition of development.

(*e*) We must not doubt. It has been well said that 'the doubts which we cherish are traitors, robbing us of the treasures which we might otherwise have won, by the fear of losing them.' The treasures here referred to are truth, perfection, justice, beauty, and strength, which give content and value to existence; that is to say, they are treasures which correspond to the most profound needs of our nature. Without joy and strength existence is impossible. Consequently everything which enfeebles us is unreal, for only that is real which bestows upon us life that is both strong and beautiful. The materialist conception of the universe inevitably leads to pessimism, for as soon as the existence of the spiritual world is denied, man sees himself surrounded by contradictions and relapses into doubt. The consciousness of his own weakness, when it is unaccompanied by faith in a power which will raise him to strength and to happiness, exercises a crippling influence upon man's life. That power will be ours, however, if we accept with faith God, and Christ, and the community of the saints, if we unite ourselves with Him, adore Him, and say: 'O Lord, Thou art that Infinity which is raised far above space and time, in which my soul wanders and is absorbed. I will not doubt and argue, but will pay Thee homage, and see in Thee the mysterious Source of all strength and power, O Thou, Who art near me, with me, in me.' What soulless and incomprehensible stupidity it would be if we did not respond to the Divine, when Jesus calls and invites and encourages us, when He tells us 'If anyone love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him.'

'MASTER, WHAT SHALL WE DO?'

And the people asked him, saying: What shall we do? . . . And the publicans also came to be baptized, and said to him: Master, what shall we do? (*Luke* iii, 10-12.)

(*a*) The answer to these questions could only be this: Do what God wishes you to do. We are governed by an inner and imperative voice which bids us do this, omit the other. The virtues and ideals are set before us as guiding stars, and in their moral beauty, and in the demands which they make upon us, the Divine Will is revealed, while we also see It incarnate in the person of Christ. God does not merely require of us that we should act in such and such a manner, He does so Himself, in order to give us an example with His command; and His divine Will, which we experience within our souls and grasp with our intellect, is revealed to us by Christ's words and demonstrated in His life. We are aware that we are subject to a law which we do not dictate ourselves; it is as impossible for us to intervene in the laws of nature as it is for us to direct the Divine Will; it is not our business to order, but to obey. We will abide by this, for God Himself has so ordained things. Under His law we feel that we are in our proper place, that we are a part of the whole, and that the powerful and ordaining Will of God, which is ruling us, will supplement and perfect all that in us which is incomplete and imperfect. God is our Helper; the law is combined with grace; our Ideal stoops and prepares the path which leads to Itself. Such is our moral creed. We believe that we have to submit to a higher Will, but we also know that It will aid us in our obedience.

(*b*) We have to fulfil the Divine Will through the whole of life, and in all life’s conditions and circumstances. Man is not a cog in a machine, or a dry leaf tossed about in the wind; he has to gain currency for the demands of the moral order against those of carelessness and habit, of the instincts and passions, of illness and poverty. We must firmly assert the importance in the external world of that ideal world which dwells within us, and there makes its demands upon us heard. To do so requires strength and discipline, for very frequently we have to use great force towards ourselves in order to master our conflicting passions; and even when the passions are for a time subdued, we have to foster good will in our lives, and to introduce into them moral motives, while maintaining a high moral standard. God requires reverence and obedience from us, and we must see to it that we fulfil these duties towards Him. We must not be fickle, indolent, and helpless, but must do His Will with alacrity. Translated into practical terms, this means that we must constantly cherish and practise love for our work, order, purity, discipline, punctuality, faithfulness, conscientiousness, straightforwardness, leniency, mercy, compassion, good will, justice, noble-mindedness, gratitude, respect, modesty, propriety, docility, humility, moderation, good sense, patience, and courage.

(*c*) It is in all these that good works are contained. Prayer, fasting, and alms deeds are not the exclusive forms in which virtue is to be practised, but the whole substance of our consciousness—the way in which we think and feel, our attitude towards God and man and the world, the degree of patience, gentleness, docility, strength and intelligence which may characterize us—is also thrown into the scales, that is to say, our whole life is taken into consideration where this is concerned.

We may term moral that fine, noble, lovable life in which the harmony and rhythm are derived from law and discipline. Morality consists of a deliberate projection of itself towards the ideal on the part of the conscious will. It does not merely consist, then, of altruism, of respect for man and for the law, of charitable and social work, but it requires utter renunciation of self as well. The charitable and social work and so on, which have already been mentioned above, are merely subordinate parts of moral life and are of themselves incapable of raising and transforming the moral standard. Personal morality consists of the conscious good will, of the consciously lofty disposition of the individual; and it is all one whether that individual be hermit or beggar. Morality is the greatness and beauty and vital force of the soul; it is the atmosphere in which the soul expands and feels itself at ease, it is its sunshine and breeze and forest scent in one. From the House of Nazareth there is wafted towards us, like a breath of Heaven, the perfume of sublime morality, of that morality which is so rare upon earth, and which should be so widespread. May the Holy Ghost infuse it into us and into our activity.

'WHOSE FAN IS IN HIS HAND'

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (*Luke* iii, 17.)

(*a*) This saying refers to the severe, inexorable God Who burns evil-doers, like chaff, in everlasting fire. 'He is like a refining fire,' says Malachias, and we also read in Jeremias, 'And I will scatter them with a fan in the gates of the land.' (*Jer.* xv, 7.) There is both wheat and chaff in humanity, and God will destroy the latter by fire. We have to reconcile ourselves to this, because it is all part of God's eternal plan. If the Divine force sometimes appears harsh to our shrinking human feelings, we must remember that a great deal exists in the world which strikes us as being hard and severe, but which nevertheless is absolutely necessary. As creatures we cannot penetrate the Mind of God, but we know that It must differ immeasurably from our own, since we are not the first Cause, nor the final End, nor absolute Being, as He is. We must not therefore allow ourselves to be astonished at anything which God may choose to do, and must willingly admit that He is the absolute Force which breaks and crushes, because ultimately no created will can be allowed to oppose His.

(*b*) Nature as well is conceived according to the creative Idea of God, and not upon sentimental lines; and its chief element is struggle, because its tendencies and demands are regulated by eternal principles, which have laid it down that the number of living beings upon earth shall always exceed the supply of those means which will satisfy their manifold needs and requirements. A second cause of this prevalence of struggle in nature is the disparity existing between all creatures, which gives rise to the necessity for effort and for the fight for existence. Nature therefore does not present God to us under the form of a tender and feeling Father. We must be upon our guard to see that civilization does not weaken and enfeeble us in certain aspects of existence, so that we become incapable of asserting and complying with the demands of the moral order. We cannot call everything good indiscriminately, and must see that evil-doers taste the severity of the law, because weak indulgence towards sin and evil is degrading to virtue. We must cordially detest and condemn sin, and there can be no talk of a general amnesty where it is concerned. The saying, '*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*,' is not true, for among the causes of sin is bad will, which cannot be forgiven until it is converted.

(*c*) Upon this firm foundation there can arise the most tender love for God. His absolute Will and the idea of Hell will not impede it, if we only look at things in the right way. God draws us graciously towards Him, and our souls cling to Him with the feelings of the slave whom the favour of her lord has made a queen. She is not disconcerted by his power; rather she desires that her king and bridegroom should be mighty, and tower above her in his majesty. We will look upon God in this way. He, Who is absolute Power, raises us and loves us! To whom should we cling, if not to Him, how could we oppose Him, or desire that which is displeasing to Him? If we do not love Him, there is nothing left for us to do save perish, for if we cannot love our infinitely gracious Lord, King, and Bridegroom we are only worthy of Hell.

THE BAPTISM OF PENANCE IN THE JORDAN

And were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. (*Matt.* iii, 7.)

(*a*) We must undertake the purification of our souls with a will, must humble ourselves and make thorough confession of all that we have done. There can be no question of having no matter for confession. Occasionally of course it is possible that we have not met with any serious disturbance; but in general the human heart is like the ever restless water which turns the millwheel, and splashes and foams its way down to the pond below. The thoughts and movements of the heart incessantly fluctuate and change; if we are not conscious of this, it is because use has dulled our perception. Our thoughts are as innumerable as the stars, our moods and feelings as countless as the waves of the sea. 'The heart is deceitful'; it conceals its motives, deludes and embroiders, for it is full of self-love; it flatters itself, it dreams of what is pleasing to itself, and is full of benevolent admiration for its own tendencies and instincts. It is but slowly that we are able to penetrate the mirage, and to view ourselves dispassionately; and then we at once begin to observe disquieting symptoms. These shake our self-confidence, and urge us to investigate our hearts thoroughly. And what do we find?—That we are full of pride, vanity, and cowardice; that we are unprincipled, indolent, capricious, self-willed, tyrannical and quarrelsome; that we sell our highest aspirations for the sake of petty gain, and are full of ignoble weakness; that we are coarse, uncultured, wrapped in an impenetrable cloak of selfishness; that, in a word, our waggon-wheels are axle-deep in clogging, slimy mud.

Unhappily, there are countless people who never reach any degree of self-knowledge; and during their whole lives they continue to embellish and to give out as genuine the counterfeit feelings of their hearts. The inner life of people such as these reminds us of the dwellings of the Assyrians long ago, for both are fashioned of mud.

Where actual sin is concerned, we may distinguish two types, the one originating in bad will, the other in frailty. Very often we sin coldly, consciously, deliberately; at other times with a blurred perception, and as it were instinctively.

This second type of sin opens up an immense field for endeavour. We sin by frailty whenever we yield to impatience, whenever we are conceited, suspicious, and hasty in judgement; whenever we yield to moods, give way to ourselves, let slip unkind and injurious words; whenever we do not fight against distractions, when we are deficient in care and moderation, and fail to keep proper guard over our thoughts. We are full of faults such as these, which, however, the enlightened eye is able to perceive and consequently to avoid.

(*b*) We must not be ashamed to own up to sins of this type in confession. If we had sinned deliberately, if for instance we had lied, or shown unkindness to our neighbour, or scandalized others, we should not shrink from the humiliation of acknowledgement. But if the sin is not premeditated, there is no need for false shame ; we must endeavour to set the mistake right by avowing it, and then make things clear to ourselves by seeing where, and in what respect we have not struggled sufficiently, where we have been slack and remiss, and where we have been indifferent to the number of times we have yielded to a fault, although we were making general efforts towards improvement. As I have already said, there is no reason for us to be ashamed if we give a faithful account of our faults under the following headings : 1. Those which were deliberate. 2. Those which constantly recur. 3. Those which constitute an annoyance to the people surrounding us. 4. Those which may retard our progress. 5. Those which, insignificant in themselves, may ultimately bring about the development of great passions.

(*c*) We must not disparage the practice of frequent confession. When we do so, it is because our souls are still blind, and we imagine that it is possible to fashion a better future for them without hard work at the foundations. That is not so ; no great results can be achieved in anything whatsoever without detail work, and in the same way we remain spiritually ill-bred if we do not overcome our faults in detail. Neither position nor dignity exempt us from this duty of self-conquest. The cardinal or the statesman, as well as the poorest labourer, has to master his moods and caprices.

We must persevere with the training of our souls, without in any way attempting to mitigate our faults. Let us observe our souls as if they belonged to another, and endeavour to awake in them those virtues which they lack. We cannot be virtuous to order, but we can inculcate and foster virtue within ourselves.

THE QUESTIONING OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES CONCERNING THE MISSION OF JOHN

The Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to him, to ask him: Who art thou? . . . Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered: No. (*John* i, 19-21.)

(*a*) Although the Synagogue did not ask this question with all the love and humility proper to faith in the Messias, we can nevertheless hear in it the longing of the people, and their bitter complaint that they have neither the prophets, nor Elias, nor the Christ; and that without them they are lost. The people stretched out their hands in yearning towards a prophet who would see God, and be filled with Him, and lead them along the right path; they wanted one of God's messengers, and no apostate to lead them his own way. The question asked of John meant: 'We are seeking a man of the spirit, who will heal the wounds made by sensuality; we are seeking a hero to liberate us—and alas! all we find are slaves like ourselves. We dream of an eagle and see nothing but fluttering moths.'

The same complaint resounds again to-day. Every truly pure and Christian soul is therefore a blessing to humanity; it is like a well in the desert or a fire in the cold of winter; it has the glorious task of spreading and giving light everywhere, and in the humility of its heart it renders help and assistance to many. This thought should provide our spiritual life and strivings with a fresh and noble motive.

(*b*) St. John the Baptist knew full well what was the desire and need of the people, and therefore he stood by the shores of the Jordan like some bronze statue, an image of strength and of spiritual soundness, exhaling a breath of purity and of virtue which is wafted towards the noisy, cowardly, and—as we might well describe them—modern townspeople, towards the heartless and headless throng, towards all the turbulent fair of sensual enjoyment and gossip and frivolity. And in this way, with the consciousness of his high mission, with his steady, unerring glance, he receives the official envoys of Judaism—first the viper brood of the Pharisees and the Sadducees in their gaily coloured clothes, then in the near background the hangers-on of Heród, the epicures, the voluptuaries, and the adulterers. What a meeting! The spirit of John rages around them like an icy blast from the north and tumbles their card-houses as if an earthquake had laid them low. 'O men,' he cries, 'away with pose and pretence! The soul within you is weeping behind the mask of sensuality and worldliness, it is bewailing its consciousness of sin, its cruel desolation, its eternal danger. Awake, return to your senses, tear apart with a firm hand the bonds of sin and of passion. My severed head will presently become the dancer's booty, but it is your immortal souls which the world desires for its prize, that it may destroy them. That is why you are ever hearing from me the hard saying: 'Do penance.' The axe is already laid to the roots of the trees, the fan is in my hand, and the wind is already scattering the chaff and blowing it into the fire. O men, penance is your primary strength, the strength in which you will be born again.'

(*c*) Although John appears to possess an iron strength, he is yet filled with tender humility. The depth of his soul is revealed in his confession that he is not the prophet, nor yet Elias, but that he is the voice of God calling upon man. In other words, St. John says: 'I am a breath from His mouth; He, and He alone, has inspired me with fire, and soul, and power. This is the reason for my trust and confidence. I depend upon Him; nor will I ever separate myself from Him, for this dependence makes me invincible. It gives me the sure hope that I am in a state of sanctifying grace, and while I cling to Him, my soul is God's glorious reflection. It teaches me so tender a love, that my will cannot deviate even one hairsbreadth from the Divine Will. During all the days of my life I will bear to my Lord and King the humble and jealous attachment which a bride bears to her betrothed. My soul is indeed His breath, and throughout the life which I have faithfully dedicated to His service, His voice resounds. In my dependence upon Him lies alike my life, my strength, and my happiness. . . .'

'WHY THEN DOST THOU BAPTIZE?'

And they asked him, and said to him: Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? (*John* i, 25.)

(*a*) By this question they intended to say: Baptism is a regeneration, a rebirth. It can only be accomplished by a man whom God has sent for this purpose. Art thou then such a one? And to-day people are asking in exactly the same way: Why do you mount the steps of the pulpit and of the altar? Are you Elias, or one of the prophets? For the pulpit should be occupied by the prophet, and a victim of love should stand before the altar. What a standard this sets before priests! The priesthood is a mission which no one may dare to take upon himself unaided; he must do so in union with God, and with the grace of God within him. He who undertakes to be consumed with fire, that he may kindle fire in others, must be utterly absorbed in God, 'the living source of fiery love,' and must be filled with the spirit of Elias. Lord, send us priests who resemble Elias and the prophets, and inflame us with prophetic zeal and strength that we may pray for them. Let us keep the Ember days in this spirit; let us fast and pray, brethren, that ardent and prophetic souls may be sent to us as priests.

(*b*) St. John does not justify himself by saying, as he could so truly, 'God has sent me, and therefore I am baptizing'—he is absolutely silent on the subject. He calls himself but a weak instrument, 'the voice of one calling,' and continues to cry his message. The chief characteristic of strength of soul is action—serving, striving, and wasting as few words as possible. It has for its motto, 'Ask not who I am; look upon the good which I have produced' Herein lies true and profound humility, in this humble speech accompanied by valuable activity; this it is, for which we must strive. We must be, act, create, without troubling ourselves about the good opinion of X., or the disapprobation of Y. In this way the humble man can rise superior to censure, and bear blame lightly.

(*c*) John answered them and said: 'I baptize with water; but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.' (*John* i, 26.) St. John baptized with water; he could not impart the sacramental baptism of Christ, but with his strong hand he dispensed the weak, natural means of sanctification, and infused into it an element of strength and greatness, because he breathed spirit into it. What cannot we achieve with all the magnificent means and instruments at our disposal—that is to say, Christ's sacraments—if only we pour soul and spirit into the task? Let us remember that we baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, we anoint the heroes of faith with chrism, we unite hearts by the bonds of the sacrament of marriage, we maintain souls in perpetual youth with the Bread of Life. . . . Truly Christ stands in the midst of us, and His strength flows so closely by us as almost to touch us—and yet often we do not recognize either.

'WHO ART THOU?'

They said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias. (*John* i, 22, 23.)

(*a*) Who art thou, thou strong, fiery spirit? Show us thy face, reveal to us the mystery of thy higher nature, of its life and joys and sufferings. And the answer comes: 'I am the man of struggle and of longing, the voice which cries alike in the wilderness and in your hearts. I call that you may wake, I call you to the struggle, I call for aid for you from heaven. And in your hearts, too, voices are heard, cries to the living God, which He answers with absolution and forgiveness, cries wrung from you at the thought of your own finiteness, when you are choked by matter and nowhere find a resting place, either in your own heart or in the starry firmament, cries for more beautiful and God-like life, arising from the lowliness and wretchedness of earthly existence. Woe to you, if you do not hear these voices! Listen, and you will hear my cry in your hearts. Oh, that every one of you could say, *Attendi et auscultavi*—"I heard and gave heed."' But so few do this; so few recognize the needs of their own nature.

(*b*) *Make straight the way of the Lord.* The ways of the Lord lead over rocks and marshes, through thicket and forest, by mountains and valleys. The ways of morality and of the spiritual world are often steep and impenetrable, and strewn with whitening bones; but we must not allow ourselves to be deterred by this, and so leave the victory to evil. After all, we can see that in spite of shipwrecks vessels still sail the seas, and the existence of cemeteries does not prevent flowers from blossoming and children from being born. And therefore even if we find here on earth great tracts of clinging undergrowth in the moral wilderness, and vast impenetrable forests of alienation from God, we may still keep to the ways of God, which are paths of beauty and happiness. The cross of Christ will make our road level and passable. Above all we must take care to make straight the ways of the Lord in our own hearts, and to cast out the stumbling blocks which might arouse His displeasure, or impede His entry into our souls.

AND WHO AM I?

(*a*) *Homo Dei*, God's man. I came forth from God, and aspire towards Him; I wish to be utterly His. We belong to Him with our hearts and with our souls, by faith and by the feeling that a connection exists between Him and ourselves, by the conviction that He is ours, that we bear Him and experience Him within us. Spiritual culture consists in the introduction of truth into our souls, in the harmonious fashioning of our lives by the light of truth. The soul which works at itself enters the ranks of the living, and sees its God, its aim, the other world; it sees the path which it must tread and helps others to find their way as well. And it not only sees, but it lives in that which it sees, and thus becomes perfect and strong, and capable of influencing others. 'Man of God . . . come down,' cried the captain of fifty to Elias, but Elias answered, 'If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee.' Fire and spirit —by these we may recognize the man of God; zeal and activity blaze forth from him like flames.

(*b*) *Homo Christi*, Christ's man, because He has ransomed and redeemed me, because I am His disciple and own Him for my Master, but even more especially because He is my friend. 'I will not now call you servants, but I have called you friends,' He tells us. Contemplation lifts me near to Him, I am bound to Him by close community of feeling, and have no other ideal save Him. He is the *figura substantiæ Dei*, the Eternal in human form, God's incomparable masterpiece. He has found the way to my heart, and has established Himself there for ever. His Gospel is my philosophy. Oh, how I love Our Lord, *my* Lord, both in His teaching, on the Cross, and in the Blessed Sacrament ! I love Him in the outbursts and in the profound depths of His love.

(*c*) *Homo Ecclesiæ*, the Church's man. In this glorious mansion I am alike *filius* and *servus*, son and servant. I am proud of the sublime structure which Christ conceived and built up at the cost of such hard toil, I reverently contemplate its foundations, columns and arches. I am free of everything here, at home here where sanctity is handed down and inherited from one generation to another, and where heroism is a habit ; I also am an heir to this wealth, and am entitled to a share in the common treasures of feeling and of life. How good it is to be a brother of the Saints, of God's heroes ! I, too, will endeavour to fashion a strong, beautiful soul, which will redound to the honour and glory of the Church, which will of itself show to all men the great and noble House from which it springs. *Christianus Catholicus*—that is my title of nobility.

REDEMPTION FROM ORIGINAL SIN

We await Him Who takes away the sins of the world, Who redeems us from original sin.

(*a*) Earth was given to man as the child of God, but man was not content with God and with his new possession, and invited two terrible guests to share it with him—Sin and Death. Original sin is really the embodiment of the impulse to break away from God. Man belonged to God, Who conceived him and created him, drew him to Himself by grace, made him His child and taught him, walked with him, and conversed with him. But man listened to the insinuations of another, and grew intoxicated with pride and poisoned by sensuality. He became estranged from God, strayed into the paths of idolatry, illusion and self-love, and began to play the sorry tragedy of his errors. Let our cry be on the contrary, 'Back to God!' We will belong to Him by our feelings of reverence and of obedience, and will both consider and deal with all contrary feelings as traitors and rebels.

(*b*) Not only was the mind of rebellious man darkened, but insurrection broke out within him; the animal appeared in his blood, in his instincts, and his inclinations, and led him from reverence for the fine soul and the fine spirit to worship of the body and its beauty. He became weak of soul and of body, because he had become animal. We can observe the phenomena of degeneracy in the fiery blooded, violent, brutalized creatures wandering in the woods, clad in skins, who followed in the tracks of the Serpent. The body can only remain strong and healthy when a strong and healthy soul rules them.

(*c*) Death followed in the steps of sin. 'Thou shalt die the death, because thou hast sinned.' Adam was soon to learn the meaning of those words, when the day came upon which he saw Abel lying dead before him, slain by his brother's hand. What a horrible, chill, mercilessly inexorable power is death! We shiver at its touch, our blood turns to ice, for we know that it brings destruction and corruption in its train. Oh soul, you principle of strength and beauty, in what way do you contemplate the guest whom you invited by your revolt?

Let us hate sin with a mortal hatred, with all the horror of life towards corruption, for we desire to live! Life is alike our device and our song.

‘I WILL PUT ENMITIES BETWEEN THEE AND THE WOMAN.’ (*Gen.* iii, 15.)

(*a*) God put enmity between the woman and the spirit of denial and opposition, which trusted to its own strength and declared ‘I will not serve.’ We see its descendant to-day in those who doubt and deny and listen to the suggestions of darkness. And the woman is the pure, radiantly beautiful and sublime Woman of Revelation—Mary. Let us take good heed when we pass beneath the branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and hear the voice which whispers ‘you too shall know,’ to withstand the voice, and when our unruly thoughts and passions tempt us to break away, or the glamour of a great name incites us to disbelief or to free thought, the Woman will be our protection and our help. Let us always take her part. She will be our refuge; she strengthens our wills, banishes depression and dispiritedness, and teaches us how to love and to value life as we should.

(*b*) *She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heal.* Amid the struggle between light and darkness, between salvation and damnation, Our Lady does not merely appear as the tender mother of Bethlehem, but as the strong woman. Struggling souls find their ideal in the immaculate beauty of Mary, which utterly confounds all error, and lies, and false enlightenment. The Church sees in Mary the Woman of the Apocalypse, who fights with the dragon, and to whom are given the two wings of the great eagle, that she may fly into the desert. She bears us aloft with her on these wings, and crushes the head of Satan beneath her feet. Let us always keep the Mother of fair love before our eyes in our strivings towards virtue. ' Fair love ' may also be described as love of that which is fair. We must remember that our souls are rendered more fair and glorious by virtue. This thought should be a powerful stimulus to the practice of virtue.

THE RESTORER OF THE KINGDOM IS NIGH

(*a*) At first God presented Him to mankind only by promise; but after the Fall He came upon earth and took man by the hand. Human happiness and salvation lay in ruins, but those who lived amongst this desolation gazed into the distance and watched the approach of the City of God. God had inflicted a heavy punishment upon them, but it was tempered by the gracious possibility of reconciliation. Eve sat before the locked gate of the Paradise which she had lost, but now God also set Mary before the gate. Truly the Church is Our Lady's Cathedral, a Cathedral in which Mary herself is the altar. In Advent it is like a church prepared for solemn High Mass; the altar is prepared, the candles lit, the bells summon the faithful, and from their lips resounds the hymn, *Rorate cœli desuper.* Christ has not yet appeared, but He will come! He will come as the Son of a Virgin.

We fall at that Virgin's feet, before the gates of God's city; we crouch there like a beggar, knocking at the door of her heart, that she may open those gates of life to us.

(*b*) History prepared for the coming of Christ through long and evil ages. 'Cursing and lying and killing and theft and adultery have overflowed: and blood hath touched blood,' we read in Osee, 'therefore shall the land mourn and everyone that dwelleth in it shall languish.' (*Os.* iv, 23.) God witnessed this from above, saw man degraded to the level of the beasts, and resolved to come upon earth. 'And I will espouse thee to me for ever,' He said, 'and I will espouse thee to me in justice and judgement and in mercy and in commiserations.' (*Os.* ii, 19.) And mankind waited for His coming. We must ever be mindful of this immeasurable grace, and the sound of the Angelus at morning, noon and evening must fill our hearts with the joyful knowledge that God is among us, that He Who was awaited through such weary ages has come. . . . And all pagan and unbelieving life must be submitted to His saving influence. The Angelus is sounded for the purpose of drawing the whole world towards the King and the Shepherd of souls. Let us not dispute over much, but let us live a triumphant, Christ-like life.

(*c*) And then the kingdom of Heaven came upon earth through Christ, Who bore it within Himself, opened it to us by His death upon the Cross, and taught us to find it in ourselves. This is included in and laid down in

His teaching; it is at once a fact and a reality; we possess the kingdom of Heaven both on earth and in the Hereafter. Those who only look for it there, desire fruit without a flower, or a flower without a root. Christ desires us to live upon earth in the spirit of the Gospel, in other words to dwell in an earthly Heaven, spent in faith, hope, and love, from which the other Heaven will grow and expand. Oh, Lord, we desire to accept Thy Gospel fully and completely, we desire to bear within ourselves the kingdom of Heaven which Christ brought upon earth, and to realize it fully. Christ Himself will lead us to this, and we will follow in His Divine steps full of enthusiastic love and inspiration.

THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN

The kingdom of Heaven draws near to us through Mary Immaculate.

(*a*) Through the darkness of Advent the radiant figure of Mary shines towards us, emerging from the misty centuries as the image of man, when he had but freshly left his Creator's hands. God had intended that man should walk in the light of Divine revelation. He gave Adam His commandments for a guide, taught him, and conversed with him. And what happened? Man listened to the voice of pride, of Satan: 'Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods.' Our eyes have indeed opened, and what do we see? Darkness, black night, unsolvable problems. Purely human knowledge does not extend beyond teaching us to build a shelter for our bodies; it does not tranquillize the soul, bringing with it as it does the torment of a view into endless night. 'Cursed be that unfruitful knowledge,' cries Gratry, 'which can confer neither love nor happiness!' Oh, Lord our God, we will be guided by Thy light, and faith in Thee shall determine our view of life, in order that we may come to resemble Thee.

(*b*) God desired that in man there should be revealed the beauty of spotlessness of soul and of pure spirituality. God planned that he should be master of his passions, that in everything he should be swayed by the good, and that he should conquer the animal side of his nature by the strength of his human dignity. Man was to have embodied the Divine idea in all the beauty of self-discipline and moral harmony. And what actually happened? Man became like the brute beasts, submitted to the tyranny of his passions, and he who had desired to be absolute master became a slave in his own house. God gave him blood and life, and gave him woman as a helpmate, to whom he was to cling with pure and noble love, and with whom he was to live in an earthly paradise But, alas! what became of the vital strength and the noble love when they were swallowed up in the flames of sensuality?

We must struggle to return to the type of the child of God, in whom nature is transfigured; we must keep the senses under the discipline of virtue, and train them to a right enjoyment of natural values.

(*c*) God desired that man should cling to Him with confidence, should fear Him and love Him, and feel with Him that he was in his Father's house; and that he should consider all his fellow men as his brethren, as members all together of God's family. Man, however, wished to make himself God, and to raise his autocratic nature to the throne. He wrenched himself away from God and entered the way of sin. And power became a heavy chain; man, who had once been free, developed into a mere beast of burden. 'Adam, where art thou?' And how is it with all these pariahs, helots, and slaves, the poor and the suffering, the cultured people, and the wretched, pitiable gods?

Ah, Lord, we desire to be as Thou hast conceived us, and not disfigured by the sensuality, egoism, and blind pride which have distorted the figure of man. We thirst for Thy light and long for Thy beauty. We desire to experience the strength of Thy discipline by self-abnegation, and to enjoy it in the consciousness of moral purity. In this way we shall become masters of our flesh and blood, of our instincts and our depravity, and Thou, O Lord, wilt clothe us in beauty and wilt draw us towards Thyself in love because Thou dost desire that there should once again be men upon earth who conform to Thy loving idea.

'THE MOON UNDER HER FEET.' (I)

And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (*Apoc.* xii, 1.)

(*a*) 'The great sign in heaven,' the star lighting up the path by which our salvation approaches, is Our Blessed Lady. The first woman upon earth had been a sign—a sign of downfall and ruin; and now she is faced with a fresh sign, that of the Woman in Heaven. To her heart God confided the salvation of the world, for she stood beside the new Adam, Who effected that salvation. Her grace shines beside His Divine power. He is the victorious King, she is the gentle Mistress and Queen. Before both a new world bows down, for they rule the new race of the children of God, and fresh life springs from their power.

(*b*) The Woman in Heaven is clothed in beauty. The glory of the sun covers her as with a garment, into which is woven all the light and colour which sunshine calls forth from the flowers, from the shimmering wings of birds and butterflies, from the glow of dawn and the clouds at sunset, from smooth waters and from sparkling jewels. Her heart is a focus of grace and of divine life; everything about her—her beauty, her stature, her crown, and her power—is both royal and glorious. She is the Mother of a royal race, the Mother of fair love.

(*c*) Her eyes glow with the reflection of the worship, the gratitude, the humility, the devotion and the fire of profoundest love, with which she clings to her divine Son, her Lord and her God. She is ever near Him, always follows Him; she is secure from all evil. Eve, on the other hand, sought for joy and beauty by following the Serpent, until she sank, with the evil spirit which had tempted her, into the slime and dust of earth. To what a different life does the Woman in Heaven lead the way! She leads us towards a life which is raised above time and sensuality, and which is clothed in spirit, and virtue, and beauty.

'THE MOON UNDER HER FEET.' (II)

(*a*) As a consequence of her greatness Mary tramples worldly vanity under foot and leads the way to the life which is at once most profound, beautiful, and true. Nothing can be more empty than a purely worldly life, nothing more vain and worthless than a soul which submits entirely upon externals. No matter how bright the colours may be in which it paints the future, ultimately it will be forced to cry, 'Was it worth while to live for this? Is it possible that four walls will finally enclose all my vast hopes, and that my existence will fade away into the monotony and suffering of age?' It is when the tumult of life dies down that the heart becomes aware of the aching void within it. In direct contrast we see the figure of her who could sing, amid the dullness and desolation of the world, 'Henceforward all generations shall call me blessed.' How came it that the humble carpenter's wife, the quiet inhabitant of Nazareth, was raised above all humanity as the 'great sign in heaven'? When did Our Lady wind her wreath of stars and weave her garment of sunshine? How was it that she became the joy of the angels and drew the gaze of all Heaven towards her?

(*b*) She worked no miracle, but she had an immaculate heart, a heart in which God dwelt in a special manner. It is always the primary condition and the secret of true greatness, that God should dwell within us. In human speech and to human eyes, then, Mary was the carpenter's wife, but God called her His in an entirely special way. Her life was not thereby altered in its externals; she lived in the little house of Nazareth, and went about her daily work in her poor and shabby clothes; but all this was based upon and filled with God's Presence, so that she overflowed with sweet consolation. The quality of our inner life chiefly depends upon the disposition of the heart; and this we can ourselves cultivate and supervise, no matter what our position in life may be or in what place we may chance to find ourselves.

(*c*) She accomplished God's work, and the wonder of a life lived in His spirit, while introducing divine motives—love, faithfulness, patience, sacrifice, indulgence, humility, obedience—into all her activity.

(*d*) Our Lady's highest joy was the feeling that she could call her own a rich and profound life, which had eternity and infinity for its foundations. To her, the external world was but a chain of symbols, pointing towards the mysteries of the spiritual world, which revealed themselves to her at every step. Before her eyes everything turned to soul and to spirit. She bore inexpressible treasures of grace through her humble, unassuming existence, which overflowed with tenderness and charm, and which was established in the very depths of her spirit.

THE GREAT SIGN IN HEAVEN

(*a*) How glorious a feast is that of the Immaculate Conception! What strength and what pathos vibrate in the joy and enthusiasm with which we greet it! It celebrates the realization of everything which the Psalms and the prophets had foretold concerning the triumph of God, and of everything which mysticism had gropingly discerned in connection with immaculate and victorious beauty. It is the feast of lofty optimism and of the true worship of beauty. The Woman, the gracious and immaculate Virgin, appears as the 'Sign in Heaven,' exalted far above all sin and evil.

The ruined world, as presented to us in startling fashion by Revelation, offers a dark, dreary contrast of misery and suffering, with the crowned power of sin and of death raging through it, drawing down a third of the stars from Heaven, and laying earth waste. This power makes the heads of men weary and their hearts desolate, and shakes the kingdom of grace into ruins, among which the Serpent takes up his dwelling. But above the destruction there appears as the divine sign of salvation the face of a Virgin. The first vision of encouragement which appears to stricken humanity, its first credo, its first statue is that of the Woman who treads under heel the head of the Serpent. She is accordingly the oldest religious symbol of hope. This was the Woman of whom the prophets sang in eager expectation, and now to-day the words mount towards her: *Vita, dulcedo et spes nostra*—Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.

(*b*) It was God Whom mankind needed. He alone could put a stop to its misery, He alone could effect redemption from sin and from death. It is strange that in seeking after God, it is the Woman whom we find; and in her image there is revealed to us the strength so long awaited and desired, the sweet goodness, the encouraging tenderness. She who crushes the head of the enemy is a beautiful mother; she who breaks the power of Hell presses her Child to her heart and feeds Him at her breast. Cease, ye harps, and be silent, O prophets, for here God is alike Creator and Poet, fashioning a very masterpiece of His love. . . . God is always infinitely good, and He is ever victorious. But, in order that His victory might be yet more complete, He veils His strength in the sweetness of motherhood, and clothes His power in the beauty of an immaculate Virgin, and thus compels us to the most profound and adoring admiration and wonderment. This is the supreme artistic triumph of His redeeming power.

No one can for long resist ideal beauty; everyone finally submits to it and finds repose there. This is precisely what we do when we finally come to rest at Mary's feet, at the feet of the supreme ideal of purity, interior beauty, and grace.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

(*a*) It is upon this great privilege of Mary that our filially devoted attitude towards her is based. It is true that by her sufferings at the foot of the Cross she became the mother of our souls, but her mission and her vocation date from her Immaculate Conception. In it she shines towards us as a new Eve, as the Mother of all living. We do not spring from her blood, but we can spring from her spirit, if we prepare the way for its entry into us by scrupulously cleansing our hearts. Let us often pray, 'Create a clean heart within me, O God!'

(*b*) The immaculate purity of Mary first makes us truly aware of our own sinful wretchedness, just as we become the foot of some lofty mountain. But here as well the conscious of our petty insignificance when we stand at heights call us. Prayer will bear us aloft to Heaven upon the wings of the dove, and the practice of self-denial will also raise us. We must not waver, but must exercise and preserve spiritual agility.

(*c*) The Immaculate Conception teaches us the high value which we must set upon grace. It was grace which made Mary so great, and all her care was directed towards God and towards the preservation of the grace which she possessed. Mary was exquisitely sensitive where grace was concerned; and she teaches us to concentrate exclusively upon the refinement and purification of the soul, to hold our inclinations strongly in check, and to listen attentively to the voice of conscience. She exhorts us to act with the greatest possible circumspection not only where anything deliberately sinful is concerned, but also where there is question of anything which may lead to sin, however indirectly. Sensitiveness such as this will protect the life of grace within us and make us responsive to God's inspirations.

THE ANNUNCIATION (I)

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth. (*Luke* i, 26.)

(*a*) God wished to be born of a human mother, in order that He might draw all men more closely and more intimately to Himself. The Word made Flesh ennobled all human nature by His birth, raised the soul of Christ to mysterious union with the Godhead, and the Blessed Virgin to the dignity of God's Mother. Since He became as one of us, like to ourselves, He acknowledged us as His brethren and raised us to kinship with God. What glory and what joy is thereby conferred upon us ! We become members of God's family, and are raised to these undreamt of heights from the depths of our lowliness. We must be specially conscious of this and happy in our knowledge at Christmas time.

(*b*) Jesus is entirely incorporated into humanity and united to us through His Mother. ' Are not His Mother and His brethren amongst us ? ' God wished to possess a home upon earth, and to be truly our Brother. It is therefore our duty to endeavour to resemble Him. How great a likeness existed between Jesus and His most holy Mother ; are we, His brethren, not to share in this also ? St. Paul tells us the features of Christ which must exist in us : ' Stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new . . . put ye on therefore . . . the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience.' (*Col.* iii, 9-12.)

(*c*) The Angel of God joyfully descended to earth upon that happy evening of the Incarnation and entered the house of Nazareth amid the silence of the night. He found the Blessed Virgin at prayer, rapt in God. She felt the moment approaching, God touched her heart and raised her soul to the heights of ecstasy. The messenger of God entered the tiny room with profoundest reverence, and gazed upon his Queen. ' Hail, Mary. . . .' Let us benefit by this beautiful example of modesty in thought and in externals.

'HAIL, FULL OF GRACE'

(*a*) Eve met the angel of darkness in the Garden of Eden, Mary is visited by the angel of light. Eve was fearless and rash, Mary is prudent and cautious; the former heard the insinuations of the Serpent, the latter the angel's reverent greeting. If we gaze upon the face of the Mother of God, and into her shining eyes, we shall penetrate into the closed garden of her soul, into the true Paradise of kinship with God, of humility, wisdom, and simplicity. We must ponder upon these characteristics of our Blessed Lady most particularly when we are reciting the joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, become absorbed in them, and endeavour to transfer them to our own souls.

(*b*) *Fear not*, *Mary*. . . . There is a certain kind of holy mistrust which is directed against the manifold thoughts and images which seek to gain entrance into our souls. Evil can assume the appearance of good, that which is sinful may appear as a purely natural instinct, for we are biassed and prejudiced. But when we are both humble and strong, we need have no fear of being deceived. The spirit of humility will preserve us from the onslaughts of moods and inconstancy, and from the tyranny of our impulses, and at the same time will exclude fear. Let us trust the angel of God as did Jacob, and mistrust darkness, like Job. We must humble ourselves and recognize our own sinfulness and weakness, and with the help of God become more ardent and courageous. Everything which leads men to inertia or to cowardice does not spring from God's spirit.

(*c*) *Thou hast found grace with God.* 'Thou art the subject of His pleasure; He created thee that He might rest in thee, and that thou mightest rejoice in this heaven within thy soul.'

To us the kingdom of Heaven within is often a hidden treasure, which we can find and get to know by hidden and devious ways alone. Sometimes we only perceive its splendour and sweetness after we have lost it. O Lord our God, send us Thy love, we beseech Thee, and grant that we may find Thee. Do not allow the coldness of our souls to quench the warmth of Thy love, but draw us ever more closely towards Thee!

THE ANNUNCIATION (II)

Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son. . . . He shall be great. (*Luke* i, 31.)

(*a*) He will be great, for He will be the Redeemer. He will awaken the peoples, He will be the King of the world, and He will belong to thee in an entirely special manner, He will be entirely thine. Thou belongest to the hierarchy of this greatness and power, thou hast called Him, and therefore He will come down to thy breast and there abide as if in the Ark of the Covenant. He will be in thee, He will be thine, and from thee He will go forth to give Himself to all men. What is passing in thy fragrantly pure and profoundly humble soul, O thou Chosen One? And who shall say what thou dost mean to us, who honour thee as the source through which salvation came? We see the beauty of thy features repeated in the face of our Redeemer, and we hear thy tone in His voice. Thou art inextricably bound up and woven into the whole pattern of our hopes and of our happiness.

The sweetness of thy grace mingles with the feelings of our hearts; thy name and thy merciful eyes are our light and our star in the darkness and mist and night of life.

(*b*) *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* Her heart is utterly consumed by love for God and has given itself entirely to Him. And now she asks how the angel's message is to be reconciled with that surrender. Virginal love raises the question whether God may possibly require another type of love from it, and it is solely prompted by its anxiety for holy purity. Mary chose the lily for her bridal wreath, and it is only while she is adorned with the lily of purity that she is willing to take upon herself the dignity of the Mother of God; she cannot even conceive this dignity without the accompaniment of spotless virginity. See how true and unerring is her instinct—she was born to be God's Mother; her first words proclaim it. Her example teaches us that purity of soul is the primary essential in every vocation and calling, and that a high moral standard must be set and observed both in married and in unmarried life.

(*c*) *And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.*

Fiat! Mary's reply was echoed by the *fiat* of creation. She bowed her head, and became the Mother of God. The Soul of Jesus, with Which was united the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, began to live beneath her heart. This life was enclosed in Mary, and filled her soul with Divine radiance; she became the temple of God, full of strength and joy. God drew her into His confidence, shared His thoughts, His plans and His mission with her, and threw open to her virginal gaze the most profound and sublime perspectives. The soul can enjoy no greater pleasure than that of the contemplation and penetration of the inner life of God's Mother; no art can equal its fitting expression; no happiness can be greater than that which comes of imitating it. At all times artists and saints have immersed themselves in Mary's soul, and drawn from it enthusiasm, inspiration, and sanctity. Theology, art, and the genius which God bestows all vie one with another in revealing yet further to us the ineffable privileges and graces of the Mother of God. And yet no one has ever realized their ideal, not even Michael Angelo, who died when he had completed the Pieta, nor Titian, whose last, unfinished work was a picture of the Mother of Sorrows.

'AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONGST US.' (*John* i, 14.)

(*a*) Faith means complete assent and submission to the truth of God and to the facts of salvation. This conviction of truth and of reality is the backbone of faith, for faith is built up upon reality and rises step by step through constantly feeling firm ground beneath its feet. It does not depend upon effusiveness of feeling, nor upon vague moods, but upon firm conviction. God, Jesus, Mary, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary and Tabor, the Mount or the Beatitudes, Good Friday and Easter morning, the Cave, the Mount of Olives, the Ascension—all this is supernatural truth and at the same time historical fact. It is only when we adhere firmly to both, that faith possesses both strength and depth. The substance of faith like this is infinite, it has strength derived from the power of truth, and infuses this strength into earthly life, triumphing over all weariness and pettiness and boredom. 'I know in whom I have believed,' cried St. Paul. We also know. Our conviction is rooted in God and stands firm as one of His mountains.

Away, then, with all religious feeling which depends upon sentiment and mood, and has no basis of truth. Even art becomes weakly and decadent when it merely treats of moods and feelings subjectively, as we can see for ourselves in the greater proportion of modern art, which does not seek its inspiration in faith in eternal beauty. How much more then will those religions collapse in ruins which merely foster subjective feeling, and reverence illusions. O God, Thou Who art eternal Truth, O Jesus, Thou God made Man, Who didst also exist as a historical figure, Ye are the rocky foundation upon which our faith is built. We accept the Gospel with all our hearts, and cling to it with reverent firmness of conviction. Lord, we believe that which Thou hast revealed, strengthen and increase our faith. We will accept Thy truths with an enlightened, honest will, not lightly and at the behest of our moods.

(*b*) *Credo.* Upon the rocky basis of faith is built up our unity of soul and of character, and the consistency of our lives and our virtue. Greatness of soul and sanctity are inconceivable without harmony of conviction and of will. The foundation of our faith, of our will, and of our activity must be fundamentally the same. Do not let us trouble ourselves about what Renan may have said, or what Strauss may have subtracted from the Gospel; let us leave the dead to bury their dead, and stand firm in the consciousness that 'Christ is my life.' From the Gospels the figure of Christ shines towards us, and His Divine glance pierces and demolishes the pedantic wisdom of the critics. I do not desire to know what these great minds may have said about Jesus, and just as little does the question trouble me, whether the sun is a heavenly body, or as it were a great arc-lamp of tremendous power and size. . . .

He who wavers between Christ and the philosophers becomes a feeble eclectic and cuts himself off from the Source of life. The soul without religion becomes a scene of war, where reason, imagination, heart and feeling all struggle together, while great talents perish, and art and philosophy tumble into ruins. The souls which have no faith lack a distinctive physiognomy; their conception of the world is shadowy, their emotions withered and decayed. Through the lack of satisfactory spiritual and mental food they are obliged to content themselves with substitutes, and they cannot long remain healthy upon such a diet.

What does man need? The Psalmist tells us: 'Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness: thou hast set upon his head a crown of precious stones.' (*Ps.* xx, 4.) Yea, Lord, we need Thy grace in our hearts, that our weary heads may be raised. But Thou desirest that we should seek Thee with humility and good will, that we should gaze up from the noise and tumult of the street towards the turrets of Thy House. Thou dost not desire that we should stand without the gates of Thy temple, but that we should pass the doors and advance to the altar. There we will cast ourselves down and confess with the prophet that we sought for water to quench our thirst, and that we went to the muddy streams of the Nile and the Euphrates; that we tried to appease the thirst of our souls by learning, and then by the power and the charms of the world; but in vain, for we need the living waters, which God alone can cause to flow within us. These waters will make our souls blossom and bear fruit, for Thou, O Lord, wilt pour into them unity, power, and determination, alike of conviction and of will. Let our prayer be, 'For Thee I live, for Thee I die, to Thee I belong.' We will place our lives at the service of the ideals which God has set before us, will practise self-abnegation, and will allow ourselves to be led only by belief in eternal life and in the eternal values of things. We know that this will not deprive us of anything earthly which is truly worth while. Everything, but sin—this is the disposition which will give strength and motives for the life of virtue; it opposes the temptations and allurements of the world, and measures earthly charms by the standards of eternity. Its first question is always: 'What is this in comparison with eternity?' We will not have any dealings with the temptations which threaten to besmirch our souls.

THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE IN THE SOUL OF CHRIST

And of his fulness we have all received, and grace for grace. (*John* i, 16.)

(*a*) The Soul of Christ is incomparably rich. It is filled with the fulness of the Holy Ghost and of love, of contemplation and ecstasy, of longing for God and trust in Him, of joy and sadness, of rapture and suffering. Its conception of the world embraces and harmonizes heaven and earth and the trend of historical evolution. It intuitively perceives the plans of God and the abysses of predestination. It lives on the heights of contemplation, and feels and suffers in a manner incomprehensible to us. Its emotions are profound as the sea, and It is enveloped by the mystery of the Godhead as high crags are veiled by mist. God carries this Soul over the face of the abyss, lifts It from the profound depths of Its humility and bears It soaring beyond the stars, till the earth spinning in the void beneath gleams far below It like a lustrous pearl. And yet no matter to what unimaginable heights the Soul of Jesus ascends, It does not forget the mountains and valleys and forests of earth, nor the flowering slopes of Tabor. What a sweet and consoling thought this is for us, dear Jesus!

(*b*) The Soul of Jesus is infinitely sensitive. We can perceive this at every page of the Gospel, which abounds in evidence of Our Lord's unique and divine sense of beauty. He lived in perpetual ecstasy; His Soul was melted by the thought of the infinite greatness of God, and poured Itself forth into His parables. His hands were of incomparable fineness and beauty, for they were the instruments of God's wonderful power. They touched the rock and called forth streams of living water, and poured oil and balm into the wounds of the suffering.

And how wonderful was His prayer, and His praise of God! Angels constantly hovered about Him unseen, and He listened to their song. He loved palms, and olive branches—the only banners which He suffered at His entry into Jerusalem—and the forests, and the olive groves at night, when the moonlight glimmered on their pale leaves; He loved the stillness of the desert, the reedy banks of Jordan, the mountains of Galilee, the stormy waters of the Lake of Genesareth, and not least the hills of Nazareth. To Him, land and sea, Tabor and Olivet were the loom upon which He wove the threads of His ideas and parables. The heavens opened above Him at His birth, at His baptism, and at His transfiguration; and the first time that this wonder occurred, on the holy night when He was born, it was springtime in Heaven. And this is what Jesus requires of us as well—that our souls should open out and blossom forth in preparation for His coming.

(*c*) The Soul of Jesus is a victorious Soul, for It overcame the most high God—'the king hath greatly desired thy beauty.' Jesus conquered heaven, opened the gates of God's kingdom, and showed us the road thither. He spreads the wings of His longing and draws after Him the countless multitudes of doves and eagles, the souls which love God, and leads their flight homewards. We can see the gleaming of their wings, and watch them head for the sunrise; and we know that it gives Jesus the greatest joy when we too unfold our wings and follow Him with perfect confidence. Let us hasten towards Him!

'FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH'

For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (*John* i, 17.)

(*a*) The Divine Soul of Christ is the masterpiece of the Divine love, and God claimed It entirely for Himself.

It is the Soul to Which alone were addressed the words of the Creator, 'Thou art Mine Own Soul, and I desire to unite Myself with Thee in personal union.' Such is the vision which God presents to our adoration and to our wondering joy at Christmas. Let us contemplate it with suitable feelings and endeavour to penetrate the Soul of God made Man.

The principal characteristic of this Soul is Its intense and powerful longing for eternal life—the eternal life of God. *Vitam petiit a te*, says the Scripture, He sought life from Thee. And God fulfilled this desire, and instilled in the Soul of Christ the fullness of supernatural bliss, the consciousness of eternal life, and the light of contemplation. Jesus is the first and the last of all men Whose Soul actually saw God from the very first moment of Its existence, and possessed in its entirety the joy of everlasting life, and in Whom from the very beginning the radiance of eternal glory was apparent. One glance at His Face transports us, for He, our first-born Brother, is of incomparable beauty. . . .

(*b*) God crowned the Soul of Jesus with grace, *posuit in capite eius coronam*, a wreath of glory. In His hand shines the lamp whose oil is never diminished, for He is full of grace and truth, gazing upon God at all times and in all places. He gained fresh treasures with the talents which God had bestowed upon Him, nor did He lose so much as a single grain of the eternal truth entrusted to Him. Jesus is the beautiful flower of the field, the lily of the valleys, which God has planted in the eternal spring of His kingdom, and in His Soul dwells the spirit of the parables dealing with the kingdom of Heaven.

(*c*) Let us try to investigate the disposition of Christ's Soul and to grasp the sublimity and the depth of His mind. His Soul expresses the love for God of all creation, and in It is prepared that sweetness born of sanctity and grace, of which we have all partaken. The Holy Ghost penetrates It and draws from It the most fragrant acts of worship ever offered to God—'Blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow,' as Scripture says.

How intimately we must love God, if we wish to resemble and to imitate the Soul of Christ. Let us absorb ourselves in His Gospel and beg of Him, 'Speak, that I may see Thee.'

MARY, THE FIRST TO ADORE HIM

(*a*) Mary's adoration of Jesus began at the very first moment of His dwelling in her breast. She alone was chosen for this; she was the purest of all creatures, worth more in the eyes of God than all the rest of the world, and in the crystal depths of her soul there shone clear and untroubled its divine treasure of grace. We approach God by cleansing and purifying our heart from all sin; and on the degree of purification which we attain depends the closeness of our approach to Him.

(*b*) Mary received and bore Our Lord with the tenderest of all feelings—that of mother-love. Mother-love is the fairest flower of all natural emotions, and of all is able to express itself most sweetly. Let us consider the twofold sentiment which only Mary, the Virgin and Mother, can know, and which she experienced when she knelt in adoration before the Crib as God's Mother and as His Handmaid. . . .

Let us always think of God with love, even when He visits us with suffering and trials.

(*c*) The adoration which Mary offered Jesus, when she bore Him beneath her heart, increased the joy and pleasure of God. It is of course true that from all eternity God has possessed an everlasting, independent, and unchangeable degree of joy within Himself; yet He poured forth Mary's happiness, while she awaited Her Son, as a fresh stream of supernatural gladness with which to revive all spiritual life. It makes our hearts beat higher and our souls glow. Joy in God fashions us as it were into fine instruments, which respond to the ineffable bliss of the Divinity. Come into our souls, Lord, in all Thy eternal beauty, and feel the joy which our purity of heart, our love, and our devotion may afford Thee. May our souls tremble and rejoice in God and in His works.

THE SOUL OF JESUS IS THE PATTERN OF TRUE RELIGIOUS FEELING

(*a*) Religion means a bond, or tie, between God and man. Through religion we are united with, and cling to Him Who is the Source of our existence, the Father of our soul, the aim of our endeavours. It has been well said that religion is the active experience of God's presence. A soul may be said to be religious when it is truly conscious of the nearness and the love of God, when God is its light, the pivot upon which its whole life turns. Faith shows us a higher plane than that of natural existence, and links up earthly life with the perspective of eternal life. It offers the soul motives which have their origin in Heaven and gives them unflagging energy. The religious soul is full of the thought of immortality; it sees eternal treasures hidden in all conditions of life, and longs to grasp them. O God, our souls are fashioned in Thy image and likeness, and revolve round Thee as a planet round its orbit. Grant that our hearts and souls may not be like the stone which rotates with the earth in which it is embedded, and yet knows nothing of the heat and radiance of the sun. Let them, Lord, be conscious of the bonds which link them with Thee. Grant that we may be drawn to Thee, the Source of all light, and colour, and beauty. Shine upon us, that we may absorb Thy rays, Thou mighty Sun, beside which our sun is but a feeble reflection. Open the eyes of our minds, that we may see Thee everywhere and in everything, that we may be conscious of Thee in our hearts and find our rest in Thee.

(*b*) Religion is the link between two worlds, and presupposes two kinds of worlds—one bounded by time and space, and one in which life and being are completed and perfected. Both these worlds are bound one with another in the closest relationship. The Hereafter affects earthly existence, and its obligations and requirements hold good in the latter as well. If we look at things as we should, we shall see that there is but a single, undivided life, which we begin on earth and then continue for ever above. We must not allow pessimism and doubt to cast their dark shadows over the prospect of eternal life. It is true that sin and care and suffering exist, but we must be animated by faith in the ultimate triumph of good, and by fervent hope. We must not look upon everything earthly as evil and accursed, because we know that God's grace is everywhere at work, and that it affects every individual not less than mankind as a whole. We must face the shadows of life, of sickness and of death, with childlike confidence, for we are convinced that if we cling to God, they cannot harm us. There is a vast amount of evil in the world, but we must not view it either as judges or as accusers; it is our task to strive for the amelioration and the purification of life by means of prayer and love, if necessary by suffering. The Spirit of God, that creative, vivifying, bracing Spirit, is with us; His breath will fill us with indomitable hope, and constantly renew our youthful power. Let us often repeat the first words of Holy Mass: 'I will go in to the altar of God, to God who giveth joy to my youth.' (*Psalm* xlii, 4.) Yes, what we must seek at the altar, at the sacraments, and in prayer, is that utter trustfulness, that fresh and youthful energy, which cannot be impaired, for God is with them, and fills them with the breath of eternal life.

(*c*) In religion, divine supernatural life makes its presence felt in earthly existence. And this is primarily because genuine religious feeling always manifests itself in a practical fashion. It has actual specific aims, and aspires, at this very moment, to supernatural life and activity. It does not refer these aims to a future life, but has problems to tackle upon earth, problems presented by family life, by professions and callings, by friendship, by hardships and struggles, by human weakness and aspirations. And these problems must all be solved, and aid in the fashioning of the divine life within us. The extent to which this can be accomplished depends upon the degree to which we realize within ourselves the second characteristic of true religious feeling, that is to say, it depends upon the degree of intelligence, strength, and good will with which we pass through life. Good will must find its expression in a cordial and kindly feeling where all our fellow men are concerned, which makes allowances for the peculiarities of our neighbour, and reckons with the differences which exist between our temperament and his, and between ourselves and him in the matter of education, taste, habits and failings. The kindly man strives towards goodness, and is full of consideration for others; he refrains from arousing prejudice and irritability and impatience; he is perfectly aware of what is amiss, but he does not make this an occasion of conflict; instead he practises silence and toleration. If we understand religious feeling in this way, we shall not preach to our fellows, but show them in our own lives the course they should pursue when they waver and are irresolute. The truly religious soul guides and uplifts those who are near it by the superior strength, the glow and the power of attraction which emanate from it —not by moralising.

THE VISITATION (I)

And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Judea. (*Luke* i, 39.)

(*a*) Mary hastens to Hebron, among the hills. She walks lightly, in the overflowing joy and rapture of her soul, impelled by the longing for the heights. The soul of the Mother of God is full of harmony, it is all joy and bliss, love and ardour. With what feelings must she gaze upon the fertile country around, and what an incomparable melody must that be which the brooks and forests and flowers sing to her as she passes on her way! She communicates her inspiration and her solemn joy to others, to Zachary and to Elizabeth; even the babe in her womb leaps joyfully at the approach of Mary. The human soul is more bright, more warm, and more beautiful than sunshine, and can spread beauty and joy all around it. Let us always remember this.

(*b*) It is the love of Jesus which glows in the whole being of Mary and sparkles in her eyes, giving warmth to her words, and power to her touch. We must firmly believe that Christ's spirit will also shine forth from us, if we truly possess it; and we must not only believe this, but must bring it about by helping to strengthen the confidence, love, and tranquillity of others.

(*c*) God is well pleased in Mary, while she hastens over the hills of Judea. He Himself has shown her the way—'*Surge, propera amica mea*'—He is her guide; and she bears Him within her. That is the secret of our strength too; we shall be strong if we carry God in our hearts. The greatest and fundamental action which we can perform is to possess God—to 'suffer' God, as the Latin expression (*Deum pati*) runs. The love of God summons us from seclusion and points the way to the family and to society. Let us often ask ourselves this question: Am I acting upon divine impulse? And the answer is yes—if my motive is lofty, intelligent, and pure.

THE VISITATION (II)

And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted

Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. (*Luke* i, 40, 41.)

(*a*) Mary's coming to the house of Zachary is like the sunrise. As she approaches, her heart beats with joy, and her soul is vibrating with the notes of the Magnificat. When she greets Elizabeth, her voice rings like the sound of silver bells; no such salutation has ever yet resounded in Hebron. It sanctifies the soul of John, and fills Elizabeth with the Holy Ghost. It is in this way that God's inspirations work—He bestows His graces of purification and enlightenment upon us through Mary. She brings God to us, that we may be filled with Him. . . .

There is one spectator who stands silently aside—it is Zachary. For him the time has not yet come for his tongue to be loosened. Grace does not immediately banish all our trials and difficulties. It seems that it enables us to triumph perhaps in one direction only, without entirely releasing us from all that irks us. We have to suffer and to wait patiently, and not suffer ourselves to be disconcerted if we find shadow next to light and dumbness following sun.

(*b*) *And she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my lord should come to me?* (*Luke* i, 42, 43.) Elizabeth returns Mary's cordial greeting with humility, as if the dignity of her guest caused her fear; but at the next moment she breaks forth with the words, 'Blessed art thou that hast believed! I am not worthy that thou shouldst come to me, yet suffer me to rejoice in thy presence; I beseech thee to abide here, and not to depart.'

Where God and grace are concerned, there can never be any question of man's merits, or his rights, for our very existence, our capabilities and talents and deserts, are all gifts of grace. The knowledge of this strikes into our souls like a sunbeam; let us bask in it, for could we desire anything better?

(*c*) *Those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.* He who has faith proceeds to action, and accomplishes it, because young and vigorous forces are at work in his soul. Ideals are not theories, but powers, which insist upon action. Blessed is he who believes that God will not forsake him, and is confident that he will be able to withstand temptation, because he is the child of God the Omnipotent and Omnipresent. Truth will not become ours merely by contemplating it; we have to act it first. The fatal mistake made by intellectualism and rationalist philosophy consists in the idea that a concept is a fact, and that the concept of life is life itself. This is not so. '*Fac et videbis*'—'Do, and thou wilt see.' It is action which will open our eyes.

'MAGNIFICAT'

And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord: And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (*Luke* i, 46.)

(*a*) All the beauty, depth, joy, power and profound inwardness which God had showered upon Mary's soul now stream from her lips in song. Let us contemplate her radiant face, and those pure lips which magnify the

Lord, 'because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid,' by exalting her to be His Mother, 'for behold henceforth all generations shall call her blessed.' The measure in which a soul rejoices corresponds to the measure of its spiritualized purity, strength, and resemblance to God. Harmony and energy are only to be found in those cases where the intelligence functions according to the Divine idea, and where the heart and will act in a manner pleasing to God, in profound humility before Him, in noble moderation and unpretentiousness towards all men.

(*b*) *Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His Name.* The omnipotence of God has taken utter possession of Mary; she is conscious that the power of His arm, which 'hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart,' encircles her and raises her to Him—'His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.' (*Cant.* ii, 6.) Our Lady's soul descends from these heights of rapture and stoops above humanity like a fragrant, dew-washed flower, for she longs to encourage us and share with us her joy in the Power which exalts the lowly and humble. The more humble we become, the greater will be our joy and our sense of the strength which is ours. Humility knows in Whom she has placed her trust, and is certain that she will not be confounded.

(*c*) *He hath received Israel His servant.* The song of joy dies away in quiet reassurance, like that of which we are conscious on a May morning in the fields, when life and strength and beauty surround us in peaceful harmony. Mary's soul is full of tranquillity and confidence, for she already bears Jesus within her and is conscious of His protection; what harm can come near her, when she can call God her own? For us as well, possession of God and of His grace is synonymous with tranquillity in all the circumstances of life, and with the consciousness of His protection. We must keep at arm's length all disturbing and unsettling thoughts, and must not give way to anxiety; that is to say, we must not be downhearted or depressed, no matter what trouble may fall to our lot.

THE FEARS OF ST. JOSEPH

When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. (*Matt.* i, 18.)

(*a*) Amid all the sweetness of that first Christmas, the shadow of the misunderstanding caused by the fears and doubts of St. Joseph strikes a serious note. Mary, the most sweet and gracious of all women, is the reason of his agony and sorrow; the most beautiful rose has a thorn for him, because he does not understand. . . .

And this happens so often, even among the best and holiest of people; at times we are all rough and clumsy, jarring upon the feelings of those around us as pebbles grind each other in the rocky beds of streams. Yet if we cannot always understand others, we must remember that we can at least constantly practise toleration towards them.

(*b*) *Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately.* St. Joseph suffered patiently; he was not overhasty. And Our Lady kept silence and trusted God. Both remained passive, and waited for God's help. Passivity like this is a great factor in life, one with which we must reckon. Very often we are not in a position to dictate to or to alter circumstances, but even in this we must recognize and submit to God's holy Will.

(*c*) *But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.* See the angel which descends to set St. Joseph's mind at rest. It is the angel of enlightenment and consolation. Let us call upon this angel, and implore his aid, when light and encouragement seem far off, for we are not to make a habit of uneasiness and despondency, nor build up our lives entirely in the shade, because this impoverishes the soul. We must constantly strive to overcome all paralysing and belittling influences.

MARY AWAITS THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

(*a*) Our Lady while she awaits the birth of her Child appears to us as a beautiful mystery of recollection and absorption in God. She bears the Wonder of God below her heart, she is conscious that He dwells within her, and she is full of tranquil faith in the angel's message, in the signs of the nearness of the approaching Saviour, Whom even she does not behold as yet.

In the same way our own inner world conceals a wealth of sacred mysteries. We bear God within our souls by grace, and with Him the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. All this dwells within us, although to us it is invisible. Yet we must not yield to doubt and wavering because we cannot see God. His traces are there for us to see in the whole of creation, giving fresh life and growth everywhere. We live in the midst of innumerable mysteries, which are to be solved by faith alone. These reflections should constantly spur us to fresh activity, and increase our joy in God, while banishing all melancholy and dejection.

(*b*) Just as in April all nature longs for spring, so every mother joyfully yearns for the coming of her child. Our Lady called upon the approaching Saviour with heavenly fervour, crying with the Bride of the Canticles, 'Oh, that I may . . . kiss thee' (*Cant.* viii, 1). Her longing was holy, wholesome, and fertile, because she longed to give Christ to us. She could not remain barren. And in the same way every soul, every life has to bring forth deeds, and yet more deeds, which may be termed our real children, while words are but step-children. What would become of the world, if nature were barren? And what will become of grace, if it does not bring forth fruit in the shape of noble and powerful activity? The activity of grace is an essential of adult supernatural life.

THE EMPEROR'S DECREE

And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. . . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is *called Bethlehem . . . to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child.* (*Luke* ii, 1-5.)

(*a*) God has His signs and special paths, which it is good for us to recognize and to follow. See the two travellers approaching Bethlehem, constrained by the Emperor's decree, to which they yield obedience. We must see in obedience the Will of God, reverence the order of things as the Will of God, and submit to It as It is revealed to us in the commands of our superiors, doing homage to God, while obeying men.

(*b*) Who would have conceived God's coming in such a fashion? Rather would we have pictured His arrival in the midst of thunder, lightning, and tempest. Yet why do we attribute violence to God, rather than humility and love? Are these less important? Violence is not constructive, but destructive, and for the work of creation the tranquil strength of love is needed. It is in this way that the oak flourishes and spreads during the quiet warmth of June, and the chalk cliffs are built up in the still depths of the sea; thus society is cradled in the peace of the family, and great ideas, art, and learning in the sanctuary of the soul. We must love quiet and solitude, and build up our lives upon them.

(*c*) So it becomes clear to us why Christ did not come upon earth amidst pomp and pageantry. Pomp is but outward show; and when He came, He bore heaven within Himself. Where are greater light and glory to be found than in that spiritual purity which not even the darkest night can dim or tarnish? Beauty, harmony, and spiritual simplicity are what we need. Solomon in all his glory could not compare with the lilies of the field.

'THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN.' (*Luke* ii, 7.)

(*a*) The Cave of Bethlehem is a sanctuary of recollection and of absorption in the mysteries of God. Here in the holy tranquillity of the first Christmas night Our Lady was granted such an abundance of insight into the divine fact of the Incarnation, that she left immeasureably behind the conclusions of Augustinian or Thomistic theology. As God's Mother she approached most closely to Him, and possessed a correspondingly profound insight into His Being. She saw Him as her own Child, and her soul soared into ecstasy. It is here that we can most appropriately recite the Litany of Loretto—Seat of Wisdom, Cause of our joy, Vessel of Honour, pray for us! Pray for us, thou mystical Rose, who on this day didst cluster around the rocks of the Cave, and blossom sweetly there!

(*b*) *My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, shew me thy face. Let thy voice sound in my ears: for thy voice is sweet and thy face comely.* (*Cant.* ii, 14.) The Cave of Bethlehem is the rocky place where the dove nests, and where we hear it cooing; thence, too, issues a honey-sweet spring, which is the outpouring of Our Lady's prayer. In this cave she brought into the world, independent of home and all earthly culture, the Lion of Judah, the Leader of Souls. Lord, how adorable and sublime are Thy decrees! The eagle 'mounts up at thy command, and makes her nest in high places, she abideth among the rocks. . . . Her young ones shall suck up blood.' (*Job* xxxix, 27-30.) What is it that we must acquire in the contemplation of this mystery? Strength, discipline, and strict simplicity. Do not let us be soft and susceptible. Beauty and strength always imply form; and form means proportion and discipline.

(*c*) In Bethlehem we see true greatness of soul, which opposes itself in its sublime humility to the conceit and pettiness of the worldly spirit. Christ brushes aside all pomp, frippery, tinsel, and everything which flattens the senses; and like the clear icy stream which, issuing from the glacier's foot, makes for the rocky valleys, and dives swirling into the depths, He presents humility to the world as sublime and victorious strength. We are true to the spirit of our age, are troubled about many things, all equally unimportant. We frequently yield to childish and unreasonable irritability at the pettiness of others, thereby giving proof of our own littleness. We must never confound the unassuming strength of humility with dulness and indifference. Christ, Who is frequently described in Scripture as an eagle, is the perfect type of sublime humility.

OUR LADY'S CHRISTMAS EVE

(*a*) No forest in May was ever filled with such fragrant life, with such mysterious, sweet fertility, with such silent music and veiled beauty, as was Our Lady's Christmas Eve. In her soul glowed the predictions of the prophets, and the words of the Psalmist, and they blended with her rapturous joy, and reverence, and profound adoration. Her soul diffused the charm alike of purest virginity and most perfect motherhood; the clearest rays penetrated those mirror-like depths; her entire being overflowed with beauty and sweetness and harmony. Mary looked at Bethlehem, the rocky cave, and the manger, with the eyes of faith, of the prophet, of the saint; nay, more —she saw them with the eyes of the Mother of God. In what a glorious light they must have appeared to her! It was the light of her own sweet happiness.

Let us ask Our Lady to grant us a share in her Christmas happiness, and to give us light, so that we too may gaze upon God with the vision of love and of faith—the vision of Christmas.

(*b*) Our Lady was not admitted into the inn, because Bethlehem was full—full of foreigners and visitors, full of gossip and clamour. There was no room for her. Our hearts, too, can be like Bethlehem, with no room in them for God. They make place for everything, but God; and drink their fill of stagnant water, like a sponge that falls into a ditch.

(*c*) So Our Lady turns her steps to the Cave, where there is silence, and where nothing will prevent God's dove from nesting in the clefts of the rock. Here in the solemn tranquillity and solitude nothing can be heard save the voice of God and the step of the approaching Saviour. Our Lady rejoices in this, just as God takes pleasure in the humble little churches where simple people kneel at prayer. Here is poverty, and glowing fervour. In the Cave of Bethlehem Mary is the Ark of the Covenant, around which angels hover, awaiting the coming of the glory of the Lord.

(*d*) Mary prepares to receive her God. She expects Him, and is certain that He will come. She sees the night falling and is conscious that her soul has been placed here in the darkness of the world to light up Jesus' path. She sees the straw strewn about the Cave and in the manger, and spreads the love of her soul like a soft, scented carpet at the feet of Him Who is approaching. The night is silent, and she prepares to awaken the music of the spheres by her loving kiss of greeting. The tide of her joy wells irresistibly upwards. Nature and grace prepare the feast of her most tender love.

(*e*) Out on the hillsides and in the meadows the Gloria resounded, yet it was but a faltering echo of the hymn which arose from Our Lady's soul, that blissful song of mother-love, which God had ordained for a greeting to Himself. It was not audible to others, but this was of no consequence. The song of the heart consists of joy, and gratitude, and sweet consolation, and quickening hope; it is an interior melody which has no need of notes.

THE VIEW FROM THE CAVE (I)

(*a*) Let us cast our mind's eye back into the past and glance at our own country, at the moment of the first Christmas. The rivers were flowing in the same course, the sunset was reflected in their waters, the mountains stared impassively into the dusk, and the waves were breaking at the foot of the cliffs, as in our own day; but nowhere was there to be seen a sign of the Cross. There were a few indications of life; strings of wild duck flew over the hills, the Roman legionaries watered their horses before going to rest, barbaric camp fires were being kindled. . . . And now? Cathedral chimes as they ring in the birth of Christ drown the noise of the rushing expresses; in our homes the candles on the Christmas trees are being lit, and the blessing of that first Christmas is woven into the life of town and country.

All this the Babe of Bethlehem has wrought; He has changed the world. As sugar dissolves in water, as iron melts in fire, and snow in sunshine, so at the sweet glance of His eyes and the touch of His hand, the hard, icy world melted. Dear Lord, continue Thy handiwork, both in and around us!

(*b*) We turn to that other world, to that fragment of heaven which Our Lady carried in her soul on the first Christmas Eve. It is a world of beautiful and profound, glowing and tender feeling. She is absorbed in thoughts of God and rejoices in His infinite love. Her soul soars above her surroundings, and the Son's heroism also dwells within the Mother. The world and its customs and institutions are all transitory and variable; we must not, by clinging to them, allow them to fetter us, nor permit them to injure our souls. We must rouse our souls from their dangerous sleep, by helping them to see themselves, and to know the wonderful life that is theirs, to which life on earth acts as a nursery, in which it may develop. We have to know our souls, in order that we may fashion a heaven within them. Bethlehem, Bethlehem, thou didst not only reveal God to us, but man also; in thy light we may recognize ourselves.

(*c*) We must also look into ourselves. Mary offers us her child. The cave, the stable, the manger, straw, poverty and solitude form the setting of this Divine gift.

We can all cultivate divine sweetness, even if we live in a hovel. We should prefer not to live there; that is perfectly natural; but as it is impossible to dictate the evolution of the world with a word, and equally impossible to abolish suffering and privation with a wave of the hand, we must face all the circumstances and vicissitudes of life with the strength which God gives us. We must not seek the good merely in riches and health, but in poverty and sickness as well. The source of goodness, which we so desperately need, lies within ourselves, and it is for us to tap it.

THE VIEW FROM THE CAVE (II)

(*a*) Let us consider Rome, where power and politics carry all before them. To this power the whole earth is subject, and its iron hand stretches forth and curbs all peoples, from the pillars of Hercules to the borders of India. Pride and presumption stride abroad, clad in the purple-edged toga, but the soul of the people is ailing and corrupt. It is true that Rome issues the decree which decides the place of Christ's birth, but it does not trouble itself further about the Divine Child; later, even, it delivers up His Apostles and followers to martyrdom, and yet He will vanquish it in the end. These considerations prove to us the superiority of spiritual strength to all earthly legal and political forces. Let us cover ourselves with this strength as with a garment.

(*b*) We look at the world of Greece, where intellectual exercises, and wit and motley ideas jostle one another confusedly, toys to drown the memory of defeat. . . .

Dear Jesus, Thou art greater than Plato, Thy wisdom is more profound than that of Heraclitus and Zeno; yet Thou bringest one shadow with Thee, which frightens the worldling—Thou warnest souls of the world's deceitful, lying charm. Many there are who go astray, blinded by the *fascinatio nugacitatis* and the spell of rhetoric, so that their faith suffers injury. But Thou, O Jesus, dost stand before us in all that pioneering, constructive strength of Thine, and askest, 'Am I not greater than all these? Then come, follow Me!'

(*c*) We look at Judaism, where souls labour under the burden of inflexible religious rules; here is a broken nation, which has turned its religion into a political affair. The Jews demand a Messiah Who will conquer Rome. But God sends instead a Messiah Who brings with Him eternal life, and teaches that this will assert itself and prevail over personal and family life, and national institutions. The latter may fall into decay; eternal life never can, and never will do so, even though decay surround it.

(*d*) We look at China and India, at those ancient cultures of the Far East, which built cul-de-sacs for the human mind, blocked up by dull resignation and by the the idea of the impossibility of progress. These swarming human ant-heaps do not expect a Redeemer. They are conscious of their chains, but they do not even possess the pathos of hope. We must not follow their example; on the contrary, we must continually hope to be freed from our misery.

(*e*) We look into the world of barbarism, into the world of the races who are hidden away amongst the forests, in caves and huts and pile-dwellings. The breeze of Christmas night blows over their woods and lakes. They are unaware that God has come upon earth, but He blesses the barbarians, from whom will spring the saints who in future ages are to erect altars and churches to His Name. On this holy, holy night, we, the descendants of those barbarians, thank Thee, Lord, and entreat Thee that Thou wouldst fashion our souls according to Thine own image, that Thy features may shine forth from the face of the savage!

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST (I)

And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son. (*Luke* ii, 6, 7.)

(*a*) The appointed time came for the blessed fruit of Mary's womb to come into the world, and the little Jesus was born. This parting did not give Our Lady pain, but on the contrary filled her with tender devotion. In adoring humility she knelt before the Babe as He lay upon the hard ground, and in the same instant fresh graces were showered upon her soul. The infant eyes of Jesus rested upon this humble Handmaid of His. She was aware that she was pleasing to God, and her soul overflowed with rapture at the thought that He found joy in her mother-love. The sweetness of this bliss formed the lullaby which she sang to Him alone. We, too, sing to God alone of our longing for the happiness of eternal life; certain ties exist exclusively between Him and ourselves, in the strength of which we are able to leave family and friends and the world behind us. What a sublime idea—God and I!

(*b*) What does Mary give to her Son? The warmth of her heart, her gentle arms, her sweet kisses; she adores and loves Him. She kisses His tiny feet, His little hands, His eyes, His face. She longs to be all in all to Him. She is His temple in that poor stable, His warmth in the cold, His light in the dark, His sweet rest in the manger. . . .

We also long to do something for our new-born Saviour. For His sake we will try to purify ourselves from sensual tendencies, and will endure cold and hardships, darkness and spiritual trials for love of Him.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST (II)

And wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.

(*a*) The Eternal Wisdom arranged every detail of Our Lord's coming into the world. It decreed the position of the nations in space, and the sequence of events in time. It selected during the course of historical evolution one eternally memorable moment for that of the Incarnation. It adjusted states and countries, that the earth might serve as the footstool of the Almighty, when He descended from the highest heavens. Its searching glance picked out of towns, castles, and palaces the most appropriate resting place, and so arranged it that every detail of form and colour was in perfect harmony; and when It was ready, It drew aside the dark, heavy curtains of night and revealed to an amazed and wondering world the spectacle of Bethlehem, framed in angels' wings and divine glory, revealed the Babe and Its Mother, the Cave and the Manger. . . . The Divine plan was worked out to the last stop and comma ; the Word of God was carried out with tender grace and artistic perfection. From the contrast of darkness and light, silence and angel voices, the bare crib, with its prickly straw, and the tender mother, bitter cold and glowing love, God's Wisdom fashioned a work of art which has ever since cast an irresistible spell over all times and places and men.

(*b*) God has here welded together the most tremendous contrasts into an artistic whole. We are struck by the fact that at every turn the senses encounter all that is rough and raw, cold and bleak. The straw is thorny, the manger rough hewn and full of nails. The damp air whistles through the doorless entrance to the Cave. Locksmiths, joiners, and upholsterers have not been at work here. There are no means of making the Cave liveable, leaving entirely aside the question of common comfort ; nature and art have been equally niggardly—there is no wool, no down for the cradle ; the only covering for the Babe is a small heap of coarse swaddling bands. Everything here is bare, the rocky walls, the wooden manger, and the Holy Child Himself. We shiver, our senses are horrified and offended, and we feel tempted to turn away.

Yet no, we cannot depart. Let us try to understand what is in the mind of the Babe. '*Ego memet in ardua fixi*'—He has chosen a hard life for Himself. We must grasp the fact that Christ is the eagle, which builds its eyrie among the bleak crags. Sensuality stands remote from Him, the sweetnesses and comforts of life do not attract Him, for His flight soars far above the heavy lowering clouds of sensual pleasure, and with Him wings His young brood, all eager to gaze at the Sun. Accordingly, in Bethlehem no allowance is made for the body; it is merely the setting of the soul. Those who hanker after palaces, in which to live in luxury, or after downy nests where they may rest perpetually in drowsy comfort, must go elsewhere.

The Child's mission is directed towards the soul. It is the soul which He loves, and which He has come upon earth to free. Indeed it is true to say that the soul is all that He prizes in man. And this exclusive preference of His for the spiritual, as opposed to the temporal and physical, has been the cause of innumerable complaints and reproaches which have been levelled at Jesus by the worldly-minded. They have accused Him of ignoring the achievements of culture and of civilization, of condemning the natural pleasures of existence, and of despising beauty. They even found fault with the place of His birth, and dubbed Him a barbarian because of it. But the Divine Child merely smiles, and remains steadfast. 'It is not that which benefits the body,' He tells us, 'but that which benefits the soul and spirit, of which all men stand in need! Culture does not exist exclusively or even primarily of magnificence in architecture and decoration, of elegance in dress and adornment, and of the æsthetic quality of recreations and pastimes. The fundamental element of culture is the work of spiritual fashioning and modelling. Here in the bitter night air, in the bleak cave, you may shiver and quail; but I, your God, will grip you with My chilly hands, that your souls may shake off the intoxication of the senses. The soul is the real agent of culture, to it belongs the task of shaping and of governing; therefore it must be beautiful, pure, and lofty. If your senses rebel, nevertheless you must struggle on; come to Bethlehem, hear the substance of My message, and look upon the parting of the ways—upon the one hand the life of the senses, upon the other the life of the soul!'

(*c*) The second contrast which strikes us is the darkness which surrounds the soul as it kneels before the Cave on Christmas night, hungry for knowledge and for a glimpse of the mystery within. Darkness surrounds both man and the Crib; night rules in heaven and in the Cave. To mankind, God's dwelling lies in darkness, that is to say, God is invisible and hidden from us, veiled in mystery and incomprehensible. Theology embraces many dangerous and obscure regions, where it is easy for us to lose our way. When we find ourselves faced by the disquieting question, how after all can God be our light, we must flee to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and there seek protection from the freezing, destructive breath of doubt, and from the horror which at times is wafted towards us from the depths and abysses of being. Let us likewise flee from everything which withers our love, and robs intimacy of its bloom, diverting it into jansenistic channels. Let us avoid everything which paralyses human endeavour and replaces it by slavish inertia, and all that numbs enthusiasm and leads to tame resignation. We must not permit the disease of doubt to destroy everything vital—nature, intelligence, the soul—within us. Brethren, let us make good our escape!

Let us escape and hide ourselves in the Cave of Bethlehem! Let us flee from the wrathful and inexorable Jehovah to the manger of the Divine Child; His dear Face will light up for us the gloomy clouds which hem in the horizon of existence. When philosophy and theology desert us, let us kiss the Baby's tiny hands. He does not engage in controversy, nor will He alarm nor dismay us. He is a lovable, dear, charming reality; His glance banishes doubt and anxiety, His smile fills us with confidence. He does all this, and more, for us, and He came upon earth that we might trust and love Him. Who would not flee to Him, away from doubt and darkness? To Him, the Vision of our faith, the Goal of our hope, to the sweet familiar Bethlehem of our love?

Oh Bethlehem, Bethlehem, thou childlike revelation of eternal Love, teach us to grasp thy message aright—Love, and fear not.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE DIVINE CHILD

On the first Christmas day, spring came upon earth amid the bitter cold of winter, and God took human shape, in order that He might give Himself to us. It is then that we are granted our most far-reaching glimpse into the radiant soul of His Mother.

(*a*) It becomes clear to us at Bethlehem that God could not have given a greater gift to mankind than His Son; that He could never have approached more closely to humanity than when Christ was born as one of us; and that no one has even received Him with more glowing love than did His beloved Mother, when first she pressed Him to her heart. At the sight of the Virgin Mother's heart the liturgy bursts forth into enthusiastic praise. It shows us with profoundest reverence the soul of Mary as an altar, lighted up for the coming of the Lord, and as a temple filled with the fragrance of incense; and the rest it leaves to us. We have to picture her happiness and bliss with the deepest love and reverence. There is not, and never will be, a single soul upon earth who can fathom what Mary felt on that first Christmas night. God wished to have her to Himself, and therefore He led her away from the noisy town to the lonely cave, lying quiet on the hillside under the midnight sky; and here she brought forth her first-born Son.

Love is the union of two souls, so that from two separate entities they become one. The Mother and the Child, who once were but one, have now become two; yet this division only serves to fuse and intensify the two glowing flames of their love. In Bethlehem we see God the Son love Mary as His Mother, and Mary love God the Son as her Child. The charm and bliss of this freshly engendered reciprocal love cast an incomparable glamour over the first Christmas night. Truly we can say *hodie melliflui facti sunt cœli*, on this day the heavens have overflowed with honey.

(*b*) And the Child? 'Come ye nations, and let us adore the Lord.' To this Child worship is due, for He is Emmanuel—God with us. He belongs to us; He is our Brother. Yet we dimly perceive that God, the infinitely great, has only humiliated Himself to the extent of becoming one of us, for the sake of His high and eternal purposes. The cold and the darkness which greeted Him at His advent are symbolic of what He came to conquer—the dark power of scepticism and of death, the decay and the loss of the soul, abysses, all of them, at the mouth of which the Divine Child sits at play.

THE ANGEL OF CHRISTMAS

The nearness of the Divine Majesty fills the holy night with joy and awe. Here at Bethlehem is kindled that flame by which henceforward we light the candles on the Christmas-trees; from here comes that glory which is reflected in the faces of the little children and in the eyes of those who love God. This holy light dances in the lanterns of those who are hurrying to Midnight Mass, and leads men from distant places and lonely farms to the Crib of Christ; it burns alike in the queer Chinese houses on the shores of the Yang-tse-Kiang, in Burma, and in the towns of Europe; in countless different languages the same joy bursts forth into song: 'Jesus Christ is born, let us rejoice.'

(*a*) But now it is to the Angel of that Christmas night that our thoughts turn, not to that one from whose lips the good tidings of Christ's birth was first heard, but to the Angel who introduced Him into the hierarchy of creation, who was the first to greet and to kiss Him—and that is Our Lady. She, first in the order of nature as in that of grace, is the fairest of the Christmas Angels; she bends over the Babe and overshadows the Crib with the wings of her love and happiness. Her soul and face are overflowing with that divine beauty, which is to be the first resting place of the Infant's glance, her breast swells with that sweet milk which is to be the first food of God, upon her lips hover the smile and the honey-sweet kisses which will be the first joy of the baby Jesus. O holy, silent, mysterious night, thou first Christmas of that most loving Angel, thy glory lights up our souls, and grants us a radiant glimpse of God's splendour!

(*b*) The Holy Night was Our Lady's night of worship. She did not count the hours; in utter absorption she adored Jesus, adoring Him more perfectly than do the angels. Her tender and lofty soul attracted to itself God's Idea; it became the condensation as it were of the visions of the Prophets, the longings of the Druids, the presentiments of the Sybils and of the most subtle and profound theological perception. She enveloped God with ecstatic adoration; this she could do, for with the exception of the Soul of Christ, not a soul approached God so closely as did that of Mary. She was rapt in admiration, in homage, in praise and love, in joy and exaltation. She drew near to God's infinite uncreated glory. The Divine attributes and perfections passed before her mind—God's omnipotence and infiniteness and creative power, His dignity and beauty, His life and suffering; she followed each one of His future steps, kissed His every trace; and watched the waves of world history roll onward, finally to break before the Judgement-seat of God made Man, while proclaiming His glory. And on this thrice holy night, we too adore Thee, Lord, Thou God made Man, Thou divine Babe; we acknowledge Thy greatness, and find all our joy and consolation in offering Thee our homage.

(*c*) But for the most part Mary lingered over the thought of the Babe, of her Child. No one was capable of love like hers, of loving in her Child her God; she lifted the Babe, and with reverent trustfulness pressed Him to her heart and to her lips, and fed Him at her breast with the joy and sweetness of her own soul. The *Gloria in excelsis* was merely the echo of this greeting and glorious joy of hers, which scaled the very heights of Heaven. Could the earth have welcomed God more ardently than by receiving Him with the rapture that was His Mother's? Could it have awaited Him with greater fervour, sweetness, or tenderness, and could God have come to us in a more enchanting fashion than by being born as a tiny Baby, embracing His Mother and placing His lips to her breast, while sucking life itself? *Sitit sitiri*—He thirsts for thirst, He thirsts for the longing of our souls, for their attachment, love, and loyalty.

(*d*) Bethlehem and its Angel are not of the past. They continue to be; they live on alike in history, in art, and in poetry, but first of all in our adoration. In the Blessed Sacrament the unceasing adoration of that holy Night continues. Here Jesus is surrounded by the devotion of His Mother and of His brethren, and by the gratitude of innumerable seraphic souls. Forth from this Bethlehem countless blessings, and infinite joy, strength, and beauty stream out into the spiritual world, and their influence far surpasses that of any literature or culture, because it brings us uniquely near to God. The secret of spiritual purification and moulding, and that of eternal youthfulness, is to perceive the Divine Presence by faith, to experience and to enjoy It. This Presence transforms ordinary, prosaic, everyday existence into the fulness of noble, beautiful and God-like life. Those who grasp this have found the key to the art of living.

HIS COMING IS FROM ABOVE

(*a*) From the highest heavens He steps down to earth, to sinful, accursed earth. What sin and guilt surround

Him! At every step He meets with fresh desecration and pollution. Tears and bitter lamentations go up from earth, because it is accursed of God. The work of man is deprived of God's blessing, and his way upon earth lies amid toil and affliction. And then Jesus descends upon earth. Nature sighs, as if aware of His coming, Hell quakes at His victorious step, and a gentle breeze blows across forest and meadow, as if all things living had drawn a deep breath of relief and happiness. As if they would say—the Redeemer, the Saviour is coming, Who will sanctify all things! He conceals His ardent soul beneath the weakness of childhood, but His Heart throbs with intense longing to win eternal happiness for us. Our mighty Saviour has come, sent to us by God. Let us welcome Him with our whole heart!

(*b*) Jesus is God's Ambassador, and will give us His message. Before Him there had come a long line of prophets to bear God's Word to men. Several amongst them were reluctant, and dreaded their mission. '*Puer ego sum*'—'Lord, I am but a child; send not me,' they pleaded. The Babe of Bethlehem does not argue or hesitate; He gazes out upon the world with a beating heart and eager eyes; He sees God, and God's longing for the reconquest of humanity. The Holy Child trembles with eagerness to be our little Apostle, and to bring us salvation. Let us reverently kiss His tiny feet and say 'how lovely are the feet of the Messenger of peace,' Who promises and brings us salvation!

(*c*) He starts well equipped for the fulfilment of His great mission. He assumes the humblest of shapes and greets us with all the charm of childhood and with the lovable attractiveness of virtue. There is nothing about Him which arouses fear; He exhorts us to humility and Himself becomes our Brother, conquering our hearts and encompassing us with the sweet bonds of love. Let us love Him in our turn, and carry out all our activity in the spirit of love. His example must prompt us to kindle love in cold, indifferent, and hostile hearts, by the glow and warmth of our own.

THE EMOTIONS OF THE SOUL OF CHRIST

(*a*) *Adoration.* The human soul has a bias towards the Infinite; it is able to dive into the depths, and to scale the giddy heights of the spirit. The Soul of Christ infinitely surpassed all other souls in this respect and follows closely in the steps of the Holy Ghost, of Whom St. Paul says that He searches the deep things of God. No comparison is possible between the Soul of Jesus and the souls of, for instance, St. Paul, or Plato, or any of the mystics, for It is infinitely greater than the depths of ocean and the immensity of space. The heights of contemplation to which Jesus attained are immeasureably beyond the reach even of those privileged souls who have acquired a high degree of enlightenment and penetration into the infinite mysteries of the Godhead. The Heart of Christ is consequently an incomparable instrument of worship. Let us pray in union with Thee, dear Jesus, for Thou dost prepare the path along which we lightly tread to God. Thy Soul is full of the fragrance of incense; Thou dwellest on the heights of contemplation, abiding 'among the rocks, and . . . among the craggy flints and stony hills' (*Job* xxxix, 28).

(*b*) *Love.* The greatness of love depends upon its intimacy of union and degree of interior unction. There was no soul which stood nearer to God, and which was united more closely to God, than the Soul of Jesus. It is God's. God created the Soul of Jesus in a special manner, and united It to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. This is the cause of the superabundant joy in the Soul of Jesus. It awoke to consciousness in a single mighty transport of love and rapture. Eternal happiness was not Its final aim, for It possessed this from the first moment of Its existence, and love did not have to develop in It, since perfect love had been present there from the beginning. Theology tells us that Christ was not obliged to merit grace, for He possessed the fulness of grace from all eternity. We, however, who have to merit grace, must make the longing for it our chief conscious desire. We can increase grace by every deliberate striving towards God, by every impulse and act of the will which has Him for its aim. Let us endeavour to be both eager and constant in our desire for grace.

(*c*) *Expiation.* Dark clouds overcast the sublime soul of Christ. The sins of the world filled His soul with horror and loathing. These feelings, which must have often accompanied His daily prayer, overwhelmed Him with their intensity in the Garden of Gethsemani, and surrounded the Cross with darkest night. We know that many saints were moved to tears by the idea of sin, and that it robbed them of their sleep, but no soul upon earth could weep over sin, and atone for it, as could the Soul of Jesus. The burden of the sin-laden world fell upon Him ; He was destined to bear it, for 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' (*Isai.* l, 6.) The nearness of God consumed Him, as flames lick up wood shavings. He walked among us as the Lamb of God, and came upon earth as a sacrifice of atonement. During the holy night of Christmas we hear for the first time the voice of the Lamb calling upon us to make atonement with Him. Are we going to respond?

THE THREEFOLD LOVE OF JESUS

(*a*) *Towards God.* When Jesus was born, His Soul immediately broke forth into supernatural rejoicing, and Its first action upon entering the world was to flame up in infinite love towards God. 'I adore Thee, I praise Thee, and I thank Thee, my Father!' Thus may the *Gloria in excelsis* have resounded for the first time in the Soul of the Divine Child. 'He, as a bridegroom coming out of his bridechamber, hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.' (*Psalms* xviii, 6, 7.) Jesus loves God with a tenderness, a courage, and a devotion which have not their equal. No heart has ever glowed with such fiery love of God as His, and not even the Canticle of Canticles is capable of rendering His emotions. Dear Lord, we will endeavour to kindle love like this—the love of the bridegroom for his bride, the courageous love of the strong man—within our hearts, and to foster and enoble it, as far as in us lies.

(*b*) *Towards His Mother;* that is, towards the Chosen One who stands in the centre of the Divine plan, God's most radiant and tender masterpiece. And because He loved her, He filled her soul with grace, and her heart with life and joy. At the very moment of His birth

He infused consolation and longing and fervent love into her soul. It is impossible for us to gauge or to depict even approximately the tenderness of her feelings. Already before the birth of Christ we can clearly perceive the superabundance of grace which dwelt within her soul, while she bore Him beneath her heart. We see her hurrying over the hills of Judea, and hear the clear, ardent tone of the *Magnificat*. What must be the feelings of her heart, and what songs must resound through her soul now in Bethlehem, when the Divine Babe stretches His tiny arms towards her, and she alone is there to do Him worship? May our love, too, be such as may enable us to rise above the poverty and bleakness of our surroundings, and the hardness of our disposition.

(*c*) *Towards us*. He is the Lover of souls, Who left Heaven and came down upon earth because He loved us, like some princess who visits the hovel of her beggar bridegroom, disdaining her palace for the sake of love. The warmth of Jesus' love awakens in us the consciousness of our own value and dignity, and of our reasons for hope. 'I love you,' Jesus tells us, 'as the family of God, as my brethren and co-heirs. I love you! Awaken, and I will teach you true pride and self-knowledge, and breathe the flames of My love into your souls.'

Here truly is cause for wonder—God loves us! Now indeed we must banish from our minds all that is pusillanimous, despondent, and unworthy, and busy ourselves instead with the 'high thoughts of the children of God.' Henceforward we are kings and rulers—nay, more; we are of Divine race. This knowledge should exert a sanctifying influence upon our intellectual and emotional life, and spur us on to consecrate to God the activity, the time, and the place in which our existence unrolls itself.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF JESUS

(*a*) From the very first moment of His existence, the spiritual life of Jesus expressed itself in the most sublime and profound adoration, which ascended triumphantly to the throne of God. The soul of Christ resembles the lark, which soars joyously heavenwards as it sings, and thrills all infinity with the sound of its song. His Heart was an altar from which the fragrance of incense arose in perfumed clouds. Every prayer, every raising of His Heart to God exhaled an odour of sweetness. When He appeared upon earth it broke forth into blossom and perfume—that is to say into the spirit of humility, contrition, and fervour. Christmas night is the moment upon which His adoration and reverence assumed their most profound and tender form. We too are desirous of paying our homage to God beneath the sheltering wings of Christ, the most sublime of all His worshippers.

(*b*) The interior life of Jesus was incomparably profound, intense, and serene. It is to such tranquil depths as these that the soul feels itself drawn in the search for the perfecting and fulfilment of existence, since on the surface it finds nothing save tumult and agitation. Compare the roar of the forest to the hidden life stirring within the fir, the oak, and the beech ; the one is superficial and serves no purpose, while from the calm depths of the other comes all growth and energy. Even so the Divine Majesty is everywhere veiled in tranquillity and fathomless depth; silence is Its very atmosphere. Such was also the inner life of Jesus, which was filled with the silence that comes of utter absorption in God. Tranquillity and silence are of inestimable value, but only when by their agency the life of the soul is deepened and God's voice made audible in it; mere empty silence is dreary and oppressive. Silence of the latter kind is not recommended to us, but instead that profound spiritual tranquillity which increases the worth and content of our spiritual life.

THE CHRISTMAS OF GOD THE FATHER, OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND OF CHRIST

Each is a world apart, a world full of joy, and profundity, and intimacy; each is silent, sublime, and untroubled, like the eternal snows. Our Lady's Christmas is full of honeyed sweetness, and is of all three the closest to our comprehension. We delight in her beautiful purity of soul, which is the only adornment of the stable; we see her as a rambler rose, clinging to and hiding the bare walls of the cave. We take joy in the vigil of God's Handmaid by the side of the manger.

The Christmas of God the Father surpasses in sublimity all human conception. For joy at the Incarnation of His Son He sets a new star in the firmament, and bids His angels wing to earth to greet Him with the *Gloria.*

And what of the Christmas of Christ? Let us consider it in relation to three attributes of His interior existence, whose profound depth and intensity are beyond all human fathoming.

(*a*) First of all in relation to *His contemplation of God.* To Adam God spoke in dreams, to Moses and Isaias in visions. The human thirst for knowledge craves for sight, but it only sees dimly, as through a veil. The soul of Christ was the first creature to actually see God. Infinity unrolled itself before His eyes, and lay open to His gaze. The soul of the Babe of Bethlehem was flooded with the glory of contemplation and bore Heaven within Itself, upon the first Christmas night.

Holy night of Bethlehem, thou hidest this great light in the darkness of the Cave, but out of thee will rise the Sun of the world. Holy night, thou symbol of the darkness of life, full, like it, of silent questionings, what a clear answer dost thou give to us, who are searching for the sunrise, and the splendour of eternal Light!

(*b*) Secondly in relation to *the absolute sinlessness of Jesus.* His Christmas is therefore the expression of all that is most fine, pure, and spiritual, as compared with the sinful and restless turmoil of the world. His Soul is clear as crystal, innocent of darkness, and filled with harmony and ineffable beauty. The Soul of Christ is all sunshine, created in order that He may radiate light; His Christmas is therefore the feast of spotless purity.

(*c*) Thirdly in relation to *His holiness.* Everything belonging to God is holy—for instance the altar and the chalice, which are consecrated to His service. Consequently the Soul of Christ is infinitely holy. God calls It 'My Soul,' loves It in a manner far beyond our comprehension, and crowns It with grace and beauty, which the Canticle of Canticles praises in many varied figures—'Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's'; and again, 'Honey and milk are under thy tongue. . . .'

O holy Christmas joy of Christ! Thou art intoxicated with the bliss of God, O Thou, our King and our Brother! Jesus, our Lord and our God, in Thine eyes we can see not only Thy baby tears, but Thy glowing vision of God; we see Thy humble birthplace, but we also see the Heaven within Thy soul; and we know that Thy manger-cradle is the starting point of Thy life of conquest! Yes, our Hero and King has appeared in power and majesty, as the Only Son of the Father. He came that He might bring us salvation. Let us then bear His image in our souls, and follow Him with joy all the days of our life.

THE CALLING OF THE SHEPHERDS

And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them and . . . said to them: Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. (*Luke* ii, 8-11.)

(*a*) 'The message is not for God, and the world of stars, nor for the angels, but for you, for men. The merits and virtues and graces of the Saviour are yours; rejoice that you have become so rich through Him! His institutions, His sacraments, and His saints are yours; rejoice that you have become so powerful through Him! And He—even He Himself belongs to you; you have not merely become rich and powerful through Him, you have become like to God!'

Dear Lord, grant that we may receive the good tidings, and the infinite treasures, the heavenly strength which it promises, with reverent faith; for Thou knowest how hard it is for our poor finite minds to grasp that God is born for our sake. It is only when we remember our sore need of salvation that we can begin to fathom this immensity, and to derive from it all the infinite benefits which it offers to us.

(*b*) *And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.* (*Luke* ii, 12.) 'This shall be a sign to you, and set your feet in the right direction. If you expect to find the Saviour surrounded by banner and standard, sword and crown, you will be disappointed; He of Whom you stand in need is a tiny Babe, the symbol of a holy, unpretentious, tranquil life. You must cease to consider external appearances, overcome presumptuous thoughts, and seek and find "*in indepicto fundo cordis*," in your self-consciousness, divine worth and God Himself.'

We must endeavour to convince ourselves that our life is valuable only in so far as we have made it pure and good, that is to say, in so far as we have filled it with peace, love, and humility towards God and man. Therefore we should not aim at continually increasing our possessions and our sphere of activity, but at extending the freedom and happiness of our intercourse with God, while leading a sensible, diligent life.

(*c*) *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army.* (*Luke* ii, 13.) The heavenly army pays homage to the new-born Jesus; in it a portion of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Heaven descends to Bethlehem and there sings the song of its own country, the *Gloria in excelsis*. The angels come from the heights of Heaven, where they enjoy the Glory of God, in order to praise It in song here below. We, too, must come down from the heights, if we wish to praise God fittingly. It is only when we dwell upon the heights that our heart and mind, our soul and personality can glorify God by descending to the valleys of humility.

'THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU'

(*a*) 'You shall find the infant,' a little innocent Baby, perfectly free from all stain of sin, concerning Whom it may be truly said, 'Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' The light of innocence and of purity shines from His eyes. From Him we learn that we must be reborn to purity of heart by grace, and again become God's children. O dearest Babe of Bethlehem, we beseech Thee to help us, that we may confess and repent our sins from the bottom of our hearts, and that we may develop in our souls Thy pure and childlike spirit.

(*b*) 'Wrapped in swaddling clothes.' He claims very little from the world, although He created it. The world was a masterpiece of His creative power, but not an obstacle to the free expansion of His human and divine soul. We, too, must only take from the world that which will help us to become better and stronger, while renouncing as far as possible all that oppresses and injures the soul. Modern culture does not understand this principle; it desires to experience everything, and frequently resembles the fly which is caught in the trap set for it. We wish for life, but for life that is both powerful and restrained, and to this end we must strictly discipline ourselves.

(*c*) 'Laid in a manger.' Jesus chose humility and simplicity for His portion, because He wished to show how a truly noble human life stands out against this clear background. The world on the contrary prefers haze and mist; it does not desire clear vision, for if it were to view itself as it really is, it would see a very ugly picture. Dear Jesus, we bow to the floor of the Cave, humbly begging that Thou wilt open our eyes to the delusions and false charms of the world. We see much that is wretched and miserable within our own souls; yet the image of the New Man—Thy image—shines before us, and inspires us to imitate its features within ourselves.

WHY GOD CALLED THE SHEPHERDS

(*a*) In heaven the angel host, and on earth the band of shepherds sang the first Christmas office. The two choirs are characterized by sublimity and simplicity respectively. So it is with our God; His Face shines with the glory of eternity, but it is at the same time the Face of the Babe. It is by that faith which seeks eternity in simplicity that we shall find God and our All. We shall find Him alike in Bethlehem and in the Eucharist. What a happy and bold simplicity is that which leads us to all this! By it we shall learn the eternal value of all our small trivial actions, ignore the difficulties and profundities which encircle the Infinite, and opening our lips say boldly and with confidence: 'Our Father . . .' He did not stoop to us for the first time in Bethlehem. He came to us when He conceived the world, the animals, the dancing waves, the bright sunshine; yet He came more closely than ever before when He became a Babe, and in this simplicity raised humanity to divine dignity and strength.

We adore Thee, Thou simple, tiny Child; speak to us, who have but one care and one treasure, our immortal soul; teach us the daring of the children of God, who are not affrighted by the nearness of God, but look to Him with a childlike heart, and speak to Him with a child's lips. Teach us the true simplicity, which floods the heart with joy, gaiety, and happiness, and which finds and recognises God everywhere!

(*b*) God calls the shepherds because there is no stain of worldliness upon their souls. They are not broken down, fagged out men, poisoned and embittered by modern culture and by the economic struggle, to whom religion at the most offers some measure of consolation for what they have suffered. God forbid! We must not look upon religion as a hospital, where the ailing mind and soul receive tender care and consolation. Religion is the ardent service of our Lord and our God, for Whom we must live and die. Our service of God must be a life of strength. Let us begin it with fresh vigour, with high aspirations, and no thought of self.

(*c*) They are called because they are hardy, robust men, who do not know what weakness means. They have to keep watch at all times and in all weathers, in wind and rain, in the bitter cold of frosty winter nights.

The Good Shepherd has a special love for those who are tending their flocks on the night of His coming upon earth.

The truly spiritual soul does not find the home which it needs in the midst of earthly comfort and luxury; it builds its nest of dry crackling twigs, like the dove of the wilderness. We must discipline the soul by self-denial, for it is a plant which thrives upon stony soil, and learns to love those rocks among which its life can develop in all its splendour and beauty. We are told that peasants of the Carso, when they returned home from some more smiling and fertile region, saluted their mountains with the cry, 'I nostri bendetti sassi'—'Ye blessed rocks!' And to us the heights of faith and of self-abnegation will become dear and blessed rocks, because through them our spiritual life will become finer, sweeter, nobler.

THE ANGELS OF BETHLEHEM

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army. (*Luke* ii, 13.)

(*a*) Glorious angels, fiery spirits hover in ecstasy about the Cave. They have never known a night as sweet as this, upon which they have descended to earth, drawn by an irresistible force, and burst into their most heavenly melodies. Their song sounds softly and adoringly, vibrating with the intensity of their feeling. And they praise the Babe because of His humility. How profoundly He has humiliated Himself in the Manger and on the Cross! But God glorifies His name and sends angels to sing His praise. Where else has Jesus humiliated Himself? He has done so, infinitely, in the Blessed

Sacrament, and there we must be His angels, and praise and adore Him as did the angels in Bethlehem. *Lauda Sion Salvatorem!*

(*b*) *Praising God and saying: Glory be to God in the highest.* (*Luke* ii, 13.) The glory due to the Babe is the glory of the Most High. The dignity of His humanity infinitely surpasses the sanctity of the angels, for He is God and Man, in Whose Soul are united, for our salvation, the dearest and most divine attributes of the Godhead. How inexpressibly fortunate we are! Here we find both splendour and glowing love. Let us bless and praise God with our whole soul for this gift especially. To give honour and glory to a person means the acknowledgement and dwelling upon his eminent qualities and excellence. Glory to God can only be given there where there is understanding of His greatness, that is to say, in the heights of the mind and the soul. The splendour of creation would be but a dumb, soulless homage to the Almighty, His glory could not have come truly upon earth, if He had created neither man nor angel. God's highest glory consists in the wondering, enthusiastic cry of the created spirit, 'O Lord my God, how wonderful is Thy name throughout the earth!' Our souls are created for the purpose of proclaiming the glory and praise of God, and this is the key to the meaning of existence. The task set before our souls is the most sublime of all—we have to praise God, to declare His wonderful works, and to contribute to His Glory.

(*c*) *And on earth peace to men of good will.* Peace and harmony, not death. We must establish peace within ourselves by rendering the instincts and passions of both soul and body obedient to good will. True good will is guided by the light of reason and of faith, and is energetic and persevering in its activity. Good will is strict and severe, or lenient and mild, according the Will of God. If we follow this guide we shall live at peace with God and men and ourselves. How great, and at the same time how rare an advantage is the possession of true good will! Let us begin by desiring the good, with good will. This will create a heaven around us and redound to God's glory on high.

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

(*a*) It is good will. Leibniz says, '*Pour le vrai bonheur moins de connaissance suffit avec plus de bonne volonté, de sorte que le plus grand idiot y peut parvenir aussi aisément, que le plus docte et le plus habile.*' (*Nouv. Ess.* ii, 21, 67.) To be happy, then, we must first of all desire the good, that is to say, we must endeavour to fulfil the holy Will of God in all the circumstances of life, in sickness and health, in struggle and tranquillity, and in dryness and consolation. In every case we must faithfully desire and carry out that which faith and commonsense inspire us to do, and ask ourselves this question: What is it that God requires at this actual moment, what is my duty now that I am faced by this unpleasant situation, in my present mood, in relation to these people whom I dislike? Since we know that our moods vary and are unreliable, we must cultivate an ardent will, ready for sacrifice, that we may be always able to decide in favour of what is really and truly good. In this way we insure interior peace.

(*b*) Good will does more than this. It does good, that is to say, it benefits others, makes life easier for them, and everywhere spreads better, richer life, while exerting itself for the happiness and well-being of those around it. What a sublime task is ours when day by day we resolve to be of use to others, to approach them with kindness, laying aside all bitterness, irritability, and reluctance to be of service.

(*c*) We must do good deliberately and consciously; we must joyfully experience all our noble actions within ourselves. Why should the beauty of a good action be ignored, while a lovely landscape or the majesty of the sea afford us pleasure? We must not be afraid of pride or conceit, or of sinning against Our Lord's words, 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth,' when we taste to the full that happiness which is born of conscious goodness. Goodness does not exist unless we are conscious of it, and when we possess this consciousness, we must rejoice in it. The divine sweetness of joy in goodness will encourage us in doing further good. The enjoyment of goodness will be our best guarantee of virtue, and will enhance the fine and attractive qualities which our personality may possess.

(*d*) Good will gives us a harmonious disposition, by banishing all the discordant and discouraging elements which warp life. It smoothes our asperities, tones down our bitterness, keeps our unruly passions and impulses under control. It does not regard the physical side of human nature as being of itself sinful, but it establishes strict discipline, and, as a result, concord between soul and body. Truly good will is a magical power! 'If you desire to enter life,' Jesus tells us, 'first you must desire it—will it, and then the way will lie open before you.'

JESUS THE JOY OF THE ANGELS

(*a*) To see how tiny the Infinite became; to compare the Lord of the far distant stars with the Babe of Bethlehem; to know that here He is the same as there; to ponder the fact that God came upon earth as a Child, and that He was a Child in the profoundest sense of the word—this indeed is a vision meet for angels, a sight at which the Cherubim fold their wings and bow to the earth, and the prophecy is fulfilled, 'All the angels of God shall adore him.' From all eternity the angels have worshipped God in Heaven, but now their threefold Sanctus resounds here below. Long ago Jacob saw angels ascending and descending to and from Heaven by a ladder, and this happens again in Bethlehem. They stand before the Cave and wonder where Heaven really is, in the heights which are their abode, or here upon earth. Surely it is where God is, the tender God of love. We must all bear a heaven like this, where God abides, within our hearts.

(*b*) The greatest joy is that of the Christmas Angel. Perhaps he is that same Archangel Gabriel, who bore God's message to Mary. Upon this holy night he wings his way to earth, robed in his most splendid raiment, to proclaim the good tidings of great joy. The soul is clothed in its feelings and emotions, and these can be radiant with joy. The stable, the manger, the straw, the poverty of its surroundings cannot prevent the soul from overflowing with rapture. We must learn how to develop the moral greatness and beauty within ourselves, that we may rejoice in them and be independent of externals.

(*c*) His companions of the heavenly host rejoice with him; a wind of joy sweeps through their serried ranks as they burst into their song of praise. We must learn from this outburst of seraphic rejoicing that it is only purity and strength which can bring forth such glorious fruit, it is beyond the power of the soul which has been tarnished and darkened by the spurious joys and allurements of earth. Let us in the first place cultivate spotless purity of conscience, which is the essential foundation of all true joy.

'LET US GO OVER TO BETHLEHEM'

The shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed to us. (*Luke* ii, 15).

(*a*) The shepherds urge one another on—'Come, let us go'; their hearts are full of joyous excitement, they cannot withstand the longing which impels them forward. We, too, are often swept irresistibly onward by the tide of grace, and God encourages us by His inspirations. Impulses play an important part in human life. Youth follows the urge of enthusiasm, maturity that of duty; but the love of God is the most powerful impulse and driving power which exists, the focus of the fiery, heaven-storming toils and struggles of all the ages of man.

(*b*) The shepherds are guided by the angel's words. They were not ordered, but invited, to go to Bethlehem. God often calls us in this way. He does not command, He requests us to do something. Dear Lord, give us tender, sensitive hearts, which will always grasp what Thou requirest of us. Our hearts are ready to do Thy Will, for we know that in giving pleasure to Thy Divine Majesty lies our greatest privilege and happiness. The Psalmist tells us that God's Countenance smiles upon us, when we do good. Let us meditate upon this saying and rejoice in it.

(*c*) Ardour leads the shepherds irresistibly onward; and it is in ardour that passionate love of God manifests itself. It is tranquil but strong, like the flow of a swift current; its surface is placid and unruffled, but no power on earth can stem it. We, too, must strive, and act, and will in this way, if we are to make real progress. We must do good diligently, indefatigably, increasingly. We must act, not for the sake of appearances, but because of the divine value which our souls acquire through our good actions.

THE FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN

(*a*) Upon the rocky slope leading to the Cave there blooms the purple flower of martyrdom. While we are still kneeling before the Manger the Church celebrates the feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr. We may ask why this is so? It is because the Spirit of Christ reveals itself above all in fortitude; it is from among the martyrs that the guard of the Cave is picked. We can already discern the spirit of sacrifice in the infant Face of Jesus. While He is still lying as a Babe in the manger, there already sounds through the *Gloria*, which proclaims peace on earth, the rustling of the blood-stained palms soon to be won in the arena and by the sword. The peace heralded by the angels was the peace of the soul, which can only be attained through pain and struggle. We must not shirk sacrifice when the salvation of our immortal soul is in the balance.

Thou, sweet Babe, didst come to us as a *sponsus sanguinum ;* from the very beginning Thy path is sprinkled with blood. Already around Thy manger there rages at the instigation of Herod the merciless butchery of children like Thyself. The first flower which unfolds its petals before Thee is the blood-red flower of martyrdom. This reveals Thy spirit to us, and makes us understand that Thou dost demand blood and tears of all of us. Thou camest to give Thyself to us and to shed Thy Blood for our sake ; but Thou dost require a sacrifice from us in our turn. Let us always bear this in mind, and not shrink from pain and sacrifice—not even from the sacrifice of our blood. The sweetness and tenderness of our religious feeling must not be allowed to distract us from this fixity of intention. Dear Lord, we are ready for any sacrifice ; grant us, we beseech Thee, a true understanding of the spirit of Christmas, which will free us from the deceptions of self-love.

(*b*) Let us rejoice in the spiritual triumph, which is apparent in the martyrdom of St. Stephen. Here we find faith, grace, enthusiasm, beauty, miraculous power, wisdom, and a love of God which rises into ecstasy. We hear him speak with all the zeal and inspiration of the prophets, while he looks steadfastly to Heaven, and tells of what he sees there. The mob cast him forth and stoned him, but they could not conquer his soul. No, the victory was his—but it was won at the cost of bitter suffering. St. Stephen was one of those of whom St. Paul wrote: ' They were stoned, they were cut asunder, were tempted, they were put to death with the sword . . . of whom the world was not worthy.' (*Hebr.* xi, 37, 38.) Upon this foundation the Church of Christ is built. In the days of ancient Rome, the roads leading to the city gates were bordered with tombs, and the abode of the living could only be reached by passing through the abode of the dead. In the same way the road to the wonderful City of God is flanked by tombs—glorious tombs, the thought of which is a powerful stimulus to our moral energy, encouraging us to persevere and to face tribulation manfully. We must endure, and not suffer ourselves to be broken. Virtues and obligations are all so many chains or pillars supporting the moral order, and they must not be allowed to give way. Our obedience must be a mighty pillar, our love a golden chain, and our humility a rocky base, which will never tremble and collapse, bringing the whole edifice of faith down in ruins with them.

THE FIRST DEACON

(*a*) The first figure in the Church year to stand by the cradle of Our Lord is the first deacon, the faithful servant of love. He is placed there as a living commentary upon the love which ransoms and redeems, the love to which he has dedicated himself body and soul, offering his heart to the service of the poor and the weak. This is what we too must do. This service will bring us a superabundance of grace. We who surround the manger must be the servants of love, which Our Lord brought upon earth, and must share it with all mankind. Mothers, teachers, servants, officials, and people of all professions must serve one another in the spirit of Christ's love, and then their lives will be enriched with treasures of grace and interior joy.

(*b*) St. Stephen was the first to follow Christ, the Captain of the glorious band of martyrs. He offered men bread and they rewarded him with stones, yet these stones were sweet to him—*lapides torrentis illi dulces fuere.*—and his death was followed by a glorious triumph. His blood was the seed which germinated in the soul of Saul, flowering miraculously at the gates of Damascus. Stephen sowed love, and reaped hate; yet he won the victor's wreath, and having won it, he laid it before the Crib, at Our Lord's feet. The blood which he shed for the sake of love was a strong link between himself and God; he was bound to Jesus by ties of blood. We, too, come into contact with the Precious Blood of Our Lord, daily, at Mass and Holy Communion. Let us pray that contact with It will warm our cold hearts and inspire us with understanding and appreciation of His great sacrifice. What can we refuse to Christ, Who shed His Precious Blood to bring us life?

THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

(*a*) John was the disciple 'whom Jesus loved.' Our Lord wished to have him constantly near to Himself, and selected him specially to accompany Him on Mount

Tabor and in the Garden of Gethsemani. At the Last Supper he leaned on Jesus' breast, and to his care the Blessed Virgin was confided at the foot of the Cross. The disciple realized the immeasurable greatness of the favours vouchsafed to him; his heart overflowed, and he proclaimed, 'I am he whom the Lord loved.' These words are not merely a dry statement of fact—they are a lyric outburst of mingled pathos and joy. Christ loves us—this is our whole glory and treasure. Let our greatest ambition be to grow in His love, to increase it, and to attain to His friendship. With this aim in view we must discipline and refine our souls by increasing the purity of our heart, the sensitiveness of our conscience, and our sense of fidelity.

(*b*) The soul of John was purified by the love of Christ. He learned to love; he wrote his Gospel under the sign of love. Love filled his heart, gave eloquence to his words, and sharpened his glance. He was admitted to the Master's secrets, and was told who would betray Him. He it was who recognised Our Lord that early morning by the side of the Lake, and who followed Him along the shore, although the Master called Peter, and not him, aside. His life was a long one, that he might teach the young Church how to love. He did not die a martyr; he left us instead an example of that profound and silent love which sacrifices its whole heart without actually shedding its blood. He is the saint of love, of the love that is modest, humble, faithful, persevering and unpretentious. We will not make martyrdom the subject of our dreams, for it will probably remain but a dream; we can, however, like St. John, love Our Lord with our whole heart and soul, and this we *will* do.

(*c*) Let us also love Jesus with tenderness, and above all let us always be at great pains to see that everything—altar, tabernacle, linen, flowers—surrounding the Blessed Sacrament, in which He is so near to us, and everything which touches His Sacred Body is pure and shining, and arranged by loving, careful hands. We, too, when we approach Him, must be pure and clear in body and soul.

We must respond to the great lovableness of Jesus spontaneously, for love is full of feeling, and prodigal of song, and tender glances, and gifts. Love finds its happiness near the beloved object, breathes the air of spring there, and cries '*oleum effusum nomen tuum*' in its rapture. Jesus Himself desires our attachment; He took pleasure in Magdalen's anointing and reproached Simon the Pharisee, because the latter gave no proofs of any tender feeling.

Christ was not a stoic, and His Church shows no trace of the stoic spirit. When chalices are consecrated, the Church uses balsam, in order that the Divine Banquet may abound in fragrance and unction, and when she celebrates the joyful feast of Corpus Christi she strews flowers before Jesus in the Eucharist. She does not check the impulses of the heart. '*Diliges Dominum ex toto corde tuo*'—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.' Let us love Him then with a tender and heartfelt love.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

(*a*) A great deal of prayer is instinctive and primarily proceeds from self-love. This type of prayer is a supernatural act, but it is natural as well, since it is promoted by self-interest. We must not judge harshly, nor in any way disparage the value of the prayer of petition. Man does well when, conscious of his own weakness and dependence, he turns to God and begs for grace and help. Faith even requires him to do this, for Christ said, ‘ Without me you can do nothing,’ and although God gives continually, He desires us to ask Him to do so. It is this reiterated request which prepares the way for grace. The perils of life are a fresh stimulus to prayer, for our path skirts the abysses of hell, and death lies in wait for us. ‘ Lord, save us, we perish ! ’ cried the Apostles, before they said, ‘ Lord, teach us to pray.’ Danger put the words into their mouth, and then prayer became possible. The same thing applies to us, when we are roused by the consciousness of our spiritual need and misery ; it is only those who live heedlessly, like animals, who are incapable of prayer.

(*b*) There are other types of prayer, however, which are not prompted by interest or the hope of future benefits, but by love—love for God and for souls, wedded love, parental love, and the love of friendship. We see instances of this type of prayer in Samuel’s cry to God, in the intercession of apostles for souls, and in that of mothers for their children. We know that these prayers are actuated by love, but we also know that they are petitions, with an end in view. The pleader is oblivious of himself, but not of those whose salvation he has at heart. He says, as it were, ‘ My God, I will sacrifice my soul for their sake ; only redeem them, have mercy upon them ! I love them, and because of this I am willing to suffer for them ! ’ This method of prayer is both lofty and sanctifying, but it too is a petition which seeks a response.

(*c*) There is, however, a form of prayer which does not aim at attaining any specific result, in which we merely make acknowledgement, and our heart, fragrant with the perfume of utter selflessness, pours itself forth in love and gratitude. *Gratias agimus tibi! Confitemini Domino, quoniam bonus.* True love expresses itself in the prayer of thanksgiving. Gratitude does nothing but love God because of the greatness of His bounty, and proclaim His goodness unceasingly. God is good, infinitely good; He has overwhelmed us with His bounty, and has warmed the earth at the fire of His love, which He desires that we should feel. He wants us to realize that everything good comes from Him—life, strength, awakening, the profound life within us, and the great and beautiful world without, which is intended to give our soul colour and tone and beauty, to form and enrich and uplift it. All this comes from God, our loving Creator. And He does so much for us! He watches over us, works for us, helps us, gives us life. He crowns His mercies to us by the sweet gift of gratitude. *Deo gratias!* He wishes to make us happy by giving us eternal life, and by leading us to Himself, where all our struggles are hushed, and our desires appeased, because in Him we shall find everything, and then our only sensation will be one of eternal gratitude. The prayer of thanksgiving is the worship of the elect, the prayer of the blessed. It will be a foretaste of Heaven to us here below, if we are able to thank God for all His infinite goodness with all our heart and soul. Thanks be to Thee, dear Lord!

THANKSGIVING AT THE YEAR'S END

(*a*) On New Year's Eve we feel as if we were about to take leave of someone dear to us, as if we shook for the last time a beloved hand which has shown us many benefits. We look back over the past and everywhere perceive tokens of God's love, which has filled our souls during the past year with warmth and sunshine. Have we made use of the time He has given us, of the graces, of the inspirations, impulses towards what is good, and the powers of body and soul which He has bestowed upon us? Have we become nobler, purer, better? Or have we perhaps sinned deeply, grievously, often, and lived in forgetfulness of God and hardness of heart? Let us remember how poor and joyless our lives were then, and remember the moment when we turned to God again, repented our sins, and received His mercy and forgiveness. We relive in spirit the bright days of prosperity, health, and success, and the dark times of bitterness, temptation, struggle, sickness, and loss. We remember the roses—joys, and consolations, and pleasures—and at the same time the thorns, which pierced our hearts. All this fills us with ardent gratitude to Thee, Lord! We kneel before Thee and thank Thee humbly and profoundly for our crosses, just as much as for Thy tender caresses. On New Year's Eve our memories and our hopes and strivings can find no other expression but that of ardent, sincere, and profound gratitude.

(*b*) It is through the prayer of thanksgiving that the love of God grows and expands within us. God desires to win us and to draw us to Himself by His bounty, yet He does not triumph until the consciousness of His goodness awakens the sentiment of gratitude in our hearts. It is not until we realize the infinite goodness of God that we become grateful to Him and therefore begin to love Him adequately. God's bounties are so many fingerposts drawing attention to His love and friendship for us. He weaves a net out of grace and pulls it more and more tightly around us, so that ultimately we are forced to acknowledge and to recognize that He loves us, and that we must make return to that love by our gratitude. Sensitive souls are always grateful to God, and offer good will for good will. With St. Paul gratitude is a passion. St. John clearly discerns the prayer of thanksgiving among the voices of the blessed. In the same way the Church of Christ is full of the spirit of gratitude, and calls the Blessed Sacrament 'Eucharistia,' that is, Thanksgiving. Day by day innumerable *Deo gratias* soar heavenwards during Holy Mass. Let us recognize in the Mass the great sacrifice of thanksgiving which Christ offers for our sake, and unite our gratitude with His.

(*c*) Ingratitude is a sign of indifference. Lack of sensitiveness is at the same time lack of ardour, and a proof that the soul rightly prizes neither God's grace and condescension, nor Christ's example, and that His Eucharist stirs it to neither fervour nor love. Souls which are thus sunk in indifference should endeavour to stimulate their sense of gratitude, and to give heartfelt thanks not only at each year's end, but after each Holy Communion. This will elevate their disposition and gradually warm their hearts. We must take care to stimulate our sense of gratitude towards our fellowmen as well, and should feel ourselves beholden to those who are in our service or in that of the public. Let us pray for them all, and remember in our prayers the workers on the railways by which we travel, postal officials, domestic servants, and so on. This practice will most certainly ennoble our disposition.

(*d*) Finally, gratitude leads us to real intimacy with God. By gratitude, the great external world, with all its complications and tangles, is relegated as it were to the background, and we realize that God does everything for us, and for our sake. The Cross stood upon Calvary for each one of us, and this should make every cross which we have to bear sweet and light to us, since He Who sends them has conferred immeasurable benefits upon us. It is through gratitude that love of God and friendship with Him ripen into blossom. This is why God requires gratitude of us and reproaches us when we, His children, are ungrateful: 'I have treated them as children and . . . they have despised me.' He called the Jews a stiff-necked people—stiff-necked, because they were insensitive and ungrateful. Let us abhor ingratitude, and examine ourselves in respect of those to whom we owe gratitude, which we have not yet testified.

THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR

We have ended the year that is past by giving thanks for everything; thanks for life, intelligence, health, strength, and joy in our work; thanks for the love of friends, of parents and children, of husbands and wives; and thanks for all the gifts of nature and of grace. Now let us begin the New Year:

(*a*) With *faith*. We must pay homage to the sublime majesty of God, and adore in Him the Lord of life and of death, the King of time and of eternity. On the first day of the year we are faced by a fresh succession of His gifts. He it is Who gives us time and exhorts us to redeem it—'*redimite tempus.*' He offers us time, but it will only become ours, if we use it to fashion a good and noble life, filled with activity in the spirit of Christ. God gives us commandments and determines our duties, in the fulfilment of which we are to see the accomplishment of His holy Will. He gives us talents and grace, so that our moral activity may be both conscious and proceed from a pure heart. O Lord, source of all life and strength, we, tiny insignificant drops, are just as much the work of Thy Hands as is the mighty ocean; we rejoice in our being and bless Thee, because Thou hast created us. This holy joy in life, which Thou dost instil in us, is the rosy dawn of our New Year, when our souls shall soar towards Thee, as larks wing their way skywards at daybreak. We beg Thee to grant us faith and light. We do not know what this coming year will bring, but grant, dear Lord, whatever it may be, that the light of our souls may not thereby become darkened or extinguished.

(*b*) With *hope.* Time is like an ocean, across the surface of which storm and sunshine, sorrow and happiness, flit rapidly one after the other. Let us trust in God, for He will help us. We hope that He will preserve us from sin and error, from stumbling and scandal, from hardness of heart and of soul, and from all those dark shadows which menace the tranquillity of the spiritual life. We also hope that He will help us to practise goodness and true virtue, and that in the course of this year we shall be able to develop them yet further. We must lay our weaknesses before God, those especially of which we are most acutely conscious, and from which we must first of all free ourselves. May this New Year be the starting point of a new life! Finally let us hopefully beg for the blessing of God upon our parents, children, husbands, wives, relations, and friends.

(*c*) With great *love*. We are God's property. He gave us a heart to love Him, a soul to trust Him and to devote to Him, and talents and strength to enable us to work for Him in many and varied ways. We shall prove our love for God above all by keeping His commandments and by demonstrating our Christianity in practical fashion —by helping the needy, clothing the naked, and showing the right way to those who have gone astray, by kindness to our servants and subordinates, and care for those around us. And in order to begin this year in the fulness of holy love, we must forgive our enemies, do good to those who would harm us, bless those who curse us, and love those who hate us. Let us resolve to abstain from ill-natured gossip and misconstruction of other people's actions, to set a good example, to harm no one, to envy no one, and to be generous both in thought and deed— in a word, let us make a resolution to love.

THE CIRCUMCISION

And after eight days were accomplished, that the child should be circumcised. (*Luke* ii, 21.)

(*a*) This was the first occasion upon which the precious Blood of Christ was shed. His Blood tinges the dawn of the New Year, and calls down a blessing upon it. The Holy Blood has already begun to flow for us, and the

Blessed Virgin gazes upon these precious drops, the heavenly dew which fertilizes souls, with the most profound adoration, emotion, and love glowing in her eyes. The mystery of this shedding of the Precious Blood is the key to the secret of Mary's immaculate purity. She knows that her Son's soul—glowing, ardent, loving—is in this Blood, *anima in sanguine*, and that It is the force which has stirred whole worlds. It is in this frame of mind that we must gaze upon the Chalice at Holy Mass, and tell ourselves, ' This is His Holy Blood, His Soul and His Divine Strength, and all this is mine. . . .'

(*b*) By this outpouring of His Blood, the Infant Jesus submits to the Law for the first time. It is submission made at the cost of blood and suffering. But the Law, as the way to true power and greatness, is of its nature obliged to exact sacrifices from flesh and blood. Often it is painful to comply with the demands of duty, but nevertheless we must willingly do so. We must keep in mind God's words, ' *Vis spiritum? Da sanguinem* '— ' Do you wish for spirit? Then give blood, and give it generously and ungrudgingly.'

(*c*) The Circumcision shadowed forth the discipline in which we have to hold our souls. Stone has to be hewn and marble chiselled before an altar or a statue of Mary can be fashioned from them. In the same way our hearts and souls need circumcising, for they are rough, irregular, and shapeless; the soul has to be carved and fashioned in order that it may become a fitting receptacle for grace. The spirit of expiation requires us to discipline ourselves strictly, as an atonement for our past sins, and to work till the end at the fashioning of our souls, making of them golden tabernacles for the dwelling place of God.

'HIS NAME WAS CALLED JESUS.' (*Luke* ii, 21.)

(*a*) The names of God which were descriptive of His awe-inspiring attributes, such as the Eternal, the Sublime, the Wonderful, did not draw the nations irresistibly to Him. They were not magic words to their ears. They lacked the indefinable tone to which both Greek and barbarian, ruler and subject alike would have willingly responded and submitted. All men needed a Saviour, and this is what the word Jesus means. Because of this the name of Jesus became the greatest of all names, for it expressed all the hopes of salvation which have ever, and will ever, stir men's hearts in all the quarters of the globe. This Holy Name—of all names the most frequently carved, printed, written, and invoked, about Which the greatest struggles have raged, and for Which the most blood has been shed—means that God is our Saviour. It expresses our greatest need, that of redeeming love ; It sounds sweet upon angel lips, and yet It is full of Divine power, for It is the Name of Him concerning Whom the Angel said, ' He will save his people.' Therefore amongst all God's holy Names, the Name of Jesus is the most dear to us ; It is music to our ears, honey on our lips, and the strength and cherished treasure of our hearts.

(*b*) The Name of Jesus and the action of redemption form as it were the focus of divine creative Omnipotence. They embody all God's purposes in the creation of man, and crown this work of creation by the glory which He receives from the salvation and eternal happiness of the souls which have been redeemed. Midway between the creation and the glorification of God comes the mystery of the Incarnation, in all its manifold charm and suffering and bloodshed, which, together with its consequences, may be summed up in one word—the Name of Jesus. This Name was constantly before God, while He was creating the world, Jesus, that is to say, salvation; for God created because He wished to spread eternal happiness. The begetting of the Son, and the proceeding of the Holy Ghost from both the Father and the Son, were necessities of God's Nature from all eternity; but the creation of the world was an entirely voluntary act. God's intention to create for the sake of spreading happiness gives rise to His desire for our salvation. Let us praise and bless God, because He desires the happiness of all men, is ever creating fresh souls in order to lead them to eternal salvation, and because He has summoned us from the depths of nothingness to attain some day to eternal happiness.

(*c*) God could redeem us and ensure our eternal happiness in many different ways. He could have ordained things in such a manner that we should have continued to live for all eternity upon a renewed earth, perfectly happy, freed from all pain and suffering, and in full possession of our strength and faculties, but without seeing Him. This is a form of naturally happy immortality. God considered this insufficient. He wished to clothe our immortality with supernatural happiness, and with the splendour of His own glory, and therefore He set increasing resemblance to Himself before the created soul as its goal. This is what is meant by the words salvation of the soul, and the name of Jesus. Supernatural life and the eternal glorification of the soul require the grace of God and the Incarnation. The latter proves that God does indeed 'love all things which He has created,' and offers us in the Person of Christ the subject of our hope. He is at once both God and Man, the pledge that we human beings will some day share in God's happiness. It is through Jesus that we, and all generations, possess the hope, the right, and the power to receive eternal life. He is the Vine, we are the branches, and from Him every soul draws the sap of life. Through Him repentance is granted forgiveness, prayer its answer, and our slightest action its eternal reward. It is He Who carries benedition and happiness into all the circumstances of our earthly existence, and in the dark night of death He shines before us like the bright sun.

(*d*) Let us reflect upon the many thousands who arise to the life of grace from spiritual death at every moment of the day. In a second the darkness of sin is banished by the glorious light of grace, and the soul which was the object of the Divine wrath again becomes the child of God. Every awakening of the soul to supernatural life, every increase in grace, whether as the result of baptism or of the sacrament of Penance, are all due to Jesus. All souls, rich and poor, great and humble alike, are clad in the purple of His Blood, grow with His strength, and wear the wedding garment of His grace. The glorious activity of awakening souls to spiritual life, and of restoring it to them when lost, is carried on in the name of Jesus, quietly and imperceptibly to the external eye, at all times and in all places, in hospitals, in churches, in prisons—on the scaffold even—on ships, in the streets and fields, amidst the rattling clatter of workshops and the ceaseless roar of factories. This holy name is invoked by children and old men, by the innocent and evildoers alike. The more reverently and the more significantly we pronounce It, the greater the grace which we shall receive from It. It should be imprinted upon our heart—our thoughts—our intentions—so that It is free for all to read in our lives and activity.

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS (I)

(*a*) It is a tremendous power, a power which is acknowledged by Heaven, which subjugates Hell, and frees man. All the powers of earth merely form the poor setting in which this glorious and adorable power is framed, and at most merely serve it, or else disappear, after a brief and unreal existence. The power of Egypt, of Babylon, of Persia, and of Rome—the power of ideas and of institutions—the power of science and of art—all these are so many steps in the historical development of this world. But the power of Jesus extends over Heaven, by His eternal atonement; over Hell, the gates of which it closes; and over earth, upon which it bestows graces and eternal values. Before Him famous names like those of Cæsar, Plato, Goethe, or Napoleon pale into insignificance. In the name of Jesus let every knee bend. . . .'

(*b*) It is the power which is the motive force of the moral order. It raises us from sin and inspires us to the practice of virtue; It kindles the light of faith, and teaches us to love. Its ways are as unfathomable as those of the sunshine. It circulates through cities and countries, and is carried far and wide, like the sound of bells. It enters the souls of children and adolescents, of men and women alike. It penetrates all classes of society, as water filters through the layers of the soil, bringing with It joy and smiles, and the tears of sorrow and repentance as well. It is invoked at marriages and at deathbeds, and creates life everywhere. Babies lisp It, and the dying prepare themselves to meet Jesus by murmuring His Name. Dear Jesus, Thy holy Name is on our lips a hundred times a day, and whenever we invoke It, we proclaim our eternal longing for Thee!

(*c*) It was in the Name of Jesus that Peter and John cured the lame man at the gate of the Temple, and said, 'Arise and walk.' Following their example, the Apostles raised the whole world in the Name of Jesus, that is, by the power of the redemption which He brought; and grace does the same for each individual soul. Let us keep ourselves steadfast and make untiring and increasing progress in the strength of this Name, for we must not be weaklings, and thereby bring dishonour upon It. 'Bear the Name of Jesus' means, 'express It in your lives. Jesus, sweet Saviour, suffer us to add to Thy glory. The very thought of Thee, O Jesus, brings joy, animation, and enthusiasm to our souls.

THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS (II)

(*a*) The Name of Jesus stands for the victory of true faith over false religions, superstition, and heresy. Before Jesus came upon earth, the words of the prophets had sent tiny isolated gleams of light into the surrounding obscurity. Then Jesus arose, the bright day star, and the rays of faith shone down upon all humanity. They radiate from His teaching, fall upon the souls of the newly baptized, and upon us as well. He is our way, our truth, and our life, and our support in death. We have no other light but Jesus. In His Name we must live and in His Name appear before our Eternal Judge.

(*b*) The Name of Jesus is our hope. Through Him we hope for eternal happiness and for merit and grace. He can grant it, because He is all powerful—*Jesu potentissime, miserere nobis*—and He will grant it, because He is generous and loves us. There is no other name by which we can obtain salvation. Whenever we call upon His Name with hope, our souls spread their wings and soar aloft. They are like a ship standing out to sea, with billowing sails and a fair wind astern. Confident hope must stand strongly and unswervingly at the service of the ideals and the moral law which Jesus has bequeathed to us. In the conflicts between duty and caprice, between the moral law and fashionable ideas, hope must give us the necessary courage to obey the words of Jesus absolutely. Christians must not walk, as do the Gentiles, 'in the vanity of their mind.' (*Ephes.* iv, 17.)

(*c*) In the Name of Jesus we will pass through life with a loving heart. The magic of His Name casts a spell upon us, and stirs our most tender feelings, increasing our strength and activity. It teaches us to love genuinely, naturally, absolutely, heroically. Its light becomes our standard of judgement, and measured by its radiance the things of this world lose their spurious glitter. This Name resounds in regions where the voices of flesh and blood, of passion and of worldly power, awaken no echo and are silenced.

It is our supreme duty, and at the same time our greatest need and happiness, to possess and to enjoy the love of Jesus. It is essential to the full development of love that we should savour even the tiniest detail of both the love for God and the love for our fellowmen which resides in our souls. Let us remember this, and appreciate in others the good will, kind offices, conversation, and even the very play of expression in their faces, which are all so many reflections of the Divine love.

JESUS

(*a*) It is the Name of the 'Son of Man,' of the First among men, and It denotes the most sublime greatness which earth has ever witnessed. Many forms of greatness exist—intellectual, scientific, artistic, and literary. Yet Jesus is infinitely great, without having written books, or presented His ideas through the medium of stone or canvas. He merely lived—and in His life He expressed the kingdom of Heaven. When we contemplate His Soul, we are conscious of a sensation as of lying flat upon the earth and gazing up into the sky; it seems to approach closer and closer, until its immensity threatens to overwhelm us. . . . Jesus did not come upon earth at the head of great armies, nor did He take a share in the politics of His day, and yet He created a new world. His birth is the greatest event in the history of the world, and Bethlehem stands for more than any geological epoch, great battle, succession to a throne, revolution, or invention. With Jesus a new generation comes into being, which is 'not born of the flesh, but of God.' These 'Sons of God' are aware of their dignity, they claim freedom, that freedom 'wherewith Christ has made us free.' Humanity derives its entire moral greatness from Christ, and to us His Name is rightly dear and exalted before all others. Holy is Thy Name, O Lord! With profoundest reverence and from the bottom of our hearts we cry—may Jesus Christ be praised!

(*b*) *Jesus* is the most beautiful of all the Names of God. God is the Miraculous—the Wonderful—the Strong—Father of the future; and we give Him other names descriptive of His power and of His mercy. The Name of Jesus surpasses all these; It, too, denotes power and strength, but It is the power and strength which brought us salvation; It is sublime and terrible, but only to Satan; It is severe and inexorable, but only to sin; and to us It is sweet as honey, strong as the power of God, and fragrant as perfumed balsam. Faith turns towards this holy Name. In It we find what our soul is seeking, the way to God. Faith marches onwards in the Name of Jesus, Apostles have proclaimed It, and the martyrs sealed It with their blood. By Its strength souls are awakened to supernatural life, and opened to grace. It makes the waters of baptism living water, and gives the words of absolution power to raise souls from spiritual death. Through It prayer is heard and answered, in It expiation and sacrifice are offered to God. . . . Dear Jesus, what have we, and what should we have, were it not for Thee?

Hope turns to It. It helps our weakness to victory over sin and evil, and gives us courage and strength for the struggle; without It we should without doubt weakly yield and sink overwhelmed beneath the waters of temptation; yet by It we can walk upon the waves, for Our Lord said, 'Fear not, it is I. . . .' In the Name of Jesus are linked together the Manger, the Cross, and the Tabernacle, and that for which each stands. In It we find refuge and sanctuary from all life's trials and sufferings. In time of need we cry, 'Our help is in the Name of the Lord,' when we are grateful, 'Blessed be the Name of the Lord,' and when the soul is wounded and suffering, 'Thy Name is as oil poured out.' We must call upon this Name in all our struggles, and teach our children to invoke It constantly—let us give them this means of preserving innocence and keeping evil at bay. In temptation and sorrow, in sickness and death, let our cry be 'Jesus, help us!'

Love turns to It. It shows us God as infinitely lovable, for It describes the God of love, the God of our salvation. The whole world is an expression of God's love, as well as the words of Revelation, and the missions of the prophets and of the saints; but its complete and perfect expression is only apparent in Jesus, the sweet Saviour Who offers us the love of both friend and spouse. In His steps follow those pure souls who are the spouses of God. The feelings of the saints towards the Name of Jesus charm us like the fragrance and blossom of virgin forest. What prayer and longing—what devoted, glowing zeal—what flaming, passionate love, this Name awakens in such souls. '*Pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum*' . . . Yes, possess us utterly, victorious Love, O jealous God! Thy Name is the symbol of our glory, and the blessed bear it written on their foreheads like a crown of victory. *In nomine tuo transgrediar murum*. . . . In Thy Name we can overcome all obstacles!

THE LOVE OF CHILDREN

In the beginning of the Gospel we find two sources from which to draw love of children. The first is the glance in the shining eyes of the new-born Saviour, the second is the heart of His Mother.

(*a*) A glance at Bethlehem teaches us that it is our duty to hush the tears and griefs of childhood with motherly love, and to have the interests of children closely at heart.

This is quite obvious. Jesus first reveals Himself to humanity as a tiny Babe, lying upon hard straw and stretching out His little hands towards His Mother. The first scene of the Gospel shows us a forlorn Baby, with Its suffering and poverty, and Its hunger for the love and the breast of Its Mother. In the kingdom of God therefore, the first suffering and hunger which is apparent, is the suffering and the hunger of a Child; nakedness and homelessness are first seen in the want and misery which surround the Infant Jesus. From Bethlehem comes the invitation to participate in the works of mercy which bring happiness and peace to mankind; here is kindled that good will, which offers help and service to all who suffer, and especially to all poor children. We must take pity upon them for the sake of the Baby Jesus.

(*b*) Mary's incomparable mother-love is the model of that merciful love which dries the tears of the sorrowing and clothes the naked. God sanctified mother-love in the person of His own Mother, and showed it to the world in all that tenderness which children need and which, alas, so many do not receive. The way of the world often displays traits which make it difficult for us to perceive the traces of Divine love. Nature often appears cruel and indifferent to us, so that we often forget that God's love finds expression in her laws. We must not let this trouble us. Light and shadow, life and death flit in swift succession across the earth, yet God's solicitude has included mother-love among the laws of nature, harsh as they may appear to be at times. The regal dignity and immaculate beauty of the Mother of God invest even the bleakness of the cave and of the manger with incomparable charm. Mary is a banquet to the world. Her face, her look, her smile radiantly transfigure the poverty and want and neglect which surround her. She is one of the greatest and most immeasurable benefits which God has bestowed upon us, for she is the supremely beautiful example of womanliness and maternal tenderness, and her compassionate love draws all men to her feet. To us she is the embodiment of the most profound and sublime theology, and of exalted and perfected human nature.

The Blessed Virgin looked into the eyes of the Incarnate Word and saw there the vision intended for all humanity, that it is love which makes man like to God, and that merciful and compassionate love towards each other, and especially towards the feeble and the suffering, must fill our hearts.

Let the love which is begotten in us by the spirit of Christmas be first of all for the children. Children, after all, depend more upon love than do the rest of us. They thrive and develop as they should only when they are surrounded by an atmosphere of love. We can foster these sentiments within ourselves by the contemplation of Mary's sweetness, beauty, and exalted motherhood. Let us act upon the sacred and lofty inspiration of her example and raise up and provide for all poor and destitute children by the power of reverent and tender love.

Whoever has once realized what all this means is, through the Child Jesus, bound to all children.

MARY'S SACRIFICE

And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. (*Luke* ii, 22.)

(*a*) Many mothers toiled up the slope of Mount Moriah in the footsteps of Abraham, but each one redeemed her child and went back to her home with the reassuring thought: 'Now my child belongs to me.' There was only one mother who did not share in the others' joy. God accepted her sacrifice, and demanded the life of her Child. She alone seemed to have found no favour before the Lord, was chosen to stand security for all the others, and God's hand weighed heavily upon her. And yet this mother was not the least worthy of all those who went up to the Temple, but the most beautiful, the most pure, and the elect of all women—Mary herself. Why is this? It is because the beauty and sublimity of a soul increase its capacity for sacrifice. Only great souls are capable of making great sacrifices, and therefore the greatest of all souls had to take upon itself the greatest of all sacrifices.

(*b*) Sacrifice adorns and beautifies the soul, for it springs from love. It is a proof of love when we give up one thing for the sake of another, and the essence of sacrifice is the renunciation of one good for the sake of a higher good. We part with our money, because we love the poor—with our fortune, for the sake of honour—and with our pleasures, to comply with the laws of morality. We renounce our consolation when the honour and glory of God require it, and with our lives that we may find Christ. From Mary God demanded the life of her Son, and at that very instant she parted from Him in her heart, freely and willingly, although nothing could have caused her greater suffering. Our Lady's sacrifice was a secret, shared between herself and God. She did not make it the occasion of self-satisfaction, or of eulogy on the part of others. The glowing love and courage in sacrifice which Mary displayed at the presentation of Jesus in the Temple were its greatest ornaments in the eyes of God. The Jews considered that the new Temple was poor and bare, for its walls were not adorned with gold, as they had been in the days of Solomon ; but God knew that henceforth the adornment of His House would be richer than gold, or silver, or precious stones, because it consisted of the spirit of sacrifice.

(*c*) And this spirit is the most beautiful ornament of Holy Church as well. In her God seeks with predilection those souls who are ready for sacrifice. They seem to realize that God requires sacrifice from us all, and is well pleased in it, since they are ready to suffer all things, and to renounce all things for love of Him, and are willing to bear pain and to shed tears for His sake. The true Christian reckons this an honour. Christian women can follow Mary's footsteps in a special manner, and offer their sacrifice to God after hers. Some, like Our

Lady, give their sons to God's service, others their health, their happiness, or a beloved husband, others again prosperity, position, or cherished inclinations and projects. Among them we find souls who are truly to be honoured. The world knows nothing of them, but God knows, and that is sufficient. Consolation dwells and is to be found on the heights of sacrifice. The Christian's love of sacrifice is the mainstay and guarantee of the Christian spirit upon earth.

(*d*) And what does the Divine Child do in the arms of His mother? He submits Himself to her, in order that she may present Him to God. At the same time He gives Himself wholly and entirely to us. He is ours; to us belong His Humanity, His Heart and His Soul, His hidden and His public life, His suffering and His glory, His mother and His angels, His Church and the treasures of grace which she bestows. He gives us Holy Mass, the graces which were offered to and neglected by the damned, the holiness and the miracles of the saints, and, supreme gift of all, the emotions and the merits of His own Divine Heart. All this is at man's disposal; with it he may approach the gates of Heaven, since 'All things are yours, whether it be . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come.' (1 *Corinthians* iii, 22.) For all this we must give thanks to God. Behold, Lord, all this is ours, and we offer it to Thee! What we do is indeed little; and our worship and prayers are cold and imperfect. If only we could increase Thy glory and promote the bodily and spiritual welfare of our fellowmen . . . yet even when we fail, are we not successful, for do we not possess Jesus and His merits? These it is which we offer to God, particularly in the Holy Mass.

PURIFICATION AND SACRIFICE

Purification and sacrifice go hand in hand in the history of the soul. They are two sides of the medal ; two manifestations of the heart's striving towards God. As in the old Law the purification of the woman was accomplished by the sacrifice of the mother, now, too, spiritual purity and perfection are attained by means of sacrifice.

(*a*) The first step is obedience to the Law. This is the first sacrifice which we must make. The Mother of God is as naturally God's creature and servant as is the humblest beggar woman upon earth. Every single one of us, up to and including Our Blessed Lady, owes a duty to God of worship, of worship reaching, if need be, to annihilation. This is the meet disposition for every creature, but even more particularly for the Christian, who constantly hears from God's lips that burnt offering and sin offering He does not require, but that we should instead do His will. We must practise obedience, for it is obedience which brings order into the domain of free will, and spiritual beauty and harmony are dependent upon it. The physical order is ruled by necessity, the moral order by obedience. We cannot escape it, for to do so would be to renounce all that is true and beautiful. We will serve Thee, O Lord, and obedience shall shape our souls according to Thy holy Will. See, we are ready to obey Thy slightest whisper.

(*b*) The second step to perfection consists of willingness to do what is more perfect. This means that we must always be prepared to give—to give up more and more of our physical and sensual life, in order to increase the life of the spirit and of the soul. Flesh and blood struggle against the soul, and therefore the soul must take the field against them. Love of the more perfect spiritual life will stimulate us to sacrifice, so that we willingly enter the service of virtue, although this will cost us blood and sweat and drudgery. But who would not willingly pay this slender price, if by so doing he might attain life that is more perfect?

(*c*) The third step is heroic love, by which man is enabled to forget himself through his ardent love of God. 'Greater love hath no man than this. . . .' Mary understood the meaning of these words. She knew that she had to combine her own sacrifice with that of her Son. She had been told that a sword would pierce her heart, and through the veil of the happy tranquil years at Nazareth she saw the Cross at the end of Jesus' life—and yet her peace of soul remained untroubled.

Dear Lord, what is it that Thou dost wish of us? What awaits us in the future? Wilt Thou be content with obedience, or wilt Thou require life and blood as well? And what can we give Thee now, at this very moment, Lord? Is there anything which will cost us pain, and yet which will forward our salvation and assist us to advance in the way of perfection? Lord, we are ready!

CANDLEMAS

The presentation of Christ in the Temple is one of the most charming scenes of the Gospel. Here we see the soul that is pure and exalted above all others submitting to the law of purification. Mary's brow is radiant with the glory of her immaculate dignity, purity shines from her eyes, her garments are fragrant with lilies and myrrh;

on her arm she bears the Divine Child—and yet she comes to the Temple to be purified. She knows that God is infinitely pure and holy. And those souls who love Him also understand this, and follow in Mary's footsteps, led by the Church, the Spouse of Christ, the instrument of the Holy Ghost and the vehicle of grace, whose distinguishing mark is holiness.

(*a*) This mark of holiness reveals itself in the Church's religious life, in her teaching, activity, and virtues. *Suspirat ad sanctitatem*—she longs for holiness, and derives this longing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Church's holiness is the fulfilment of Christ's mission upon earth. St. Paul had this in mind when he wrote: 'Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water.' (*Eph.* v, 25.) St. John saw the Church adorned as a bride, wearing the crown which Christ Himself had placed upon her head. We must not disfigure the holiness of the Church by our lives; rather must they show that we are her children.

(*b*) The Church does not merely long for holiness, she both diffuses and fosters it as well. She inspired virtues—angelic purity, reverence, faithfulness, love of our enemies, perseverance, courage—whose beauty the whole world acknowledges. '*Magis timent virgines nostræ si ad lenones, quam si ad leones damnantur*,' wrote Tertullian, 'our daughters fear panders more greatly than lions.' The Church raised the standard of public morals; her holiness was a living force, and it is by this that we are to recognize her. She gives life to our souls, purifies them, shapes them into masterpieces of holiness. Her mission and her strength are directed to one aim, the sanctification of humanity; and she has carried this work of conversion and of sanctification into the far corners of the earth. And in our day she continues to open the eyes of innumerable souls to eternal light, and leads countless others away from the darkness of sin. Yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to perform this task. Souls are restless and unsettled, engulfed by the stream of indifference which is sweeping through the world. Who will awaken them to a sense of their danger and set their feet once more upon firm ground? Upon whom does this tremendous task devolve?

(*c*) *Ad vos o sacerdotes,* cries the prophet. Priests, it is with you that the duty of teaching and the apostolate rest, to you first of all. It is for you to show us the self-abnegation and the contempt of the world, the purity and the patience of which Christianity is capable. Do not expose the Church to scandal, nor hinder Christ's work by sins and faults which will rob your teaching of all its force, for the world will not heed a Gospel preached by those whose morals are unreliable. It will have nothing but contempt for a priesthood which is not fired to the glorious undertaking of the conquest of the world, by the thought of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Heart of Jesus. But you will be accorded both reverence and belief, if your lives are saintly.

THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout. (*Luke* ii, 25.)

(*a*) Simeon was an aged man, whose head was bowed down under the burden of his years, and whose soul was oppressed by the weight of his experiences, struggles, and disappointments. Humanly speaking, he was worn out. He was familiar with the world and its evils; he saw minor sinners suffering, while great sinners ruled the world; he saw vice clad in purple, and virtue in rags; but he himself was 'just and devout,' and faithful to his duty. Our intelligence and our faith, as well as our sense of duty, tell us to keep God's Will, and not the actions of sinners in view, and to direct our activity accordingly. Even when we are surrounded by filth and squalor, we can still flourish, just as flowers can bloom even upon a dunghill; if our horizon is dimmed and obscured, we still have wings to soar above the clouds! 'Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is all man.' (*Eccles.* xii, 13.)

(*b*) *Waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was in Him.* Purity of heart gives confidence and undying hope to the soul. Hope is the springtide of the soul, and blossoms in those who are vigilant and energetic, because they see clearly into the world to come and watch for eternity. It is the instinct of such souls to press onward and upward through obstacles and difficulties, like plants through the soil, into the fulness of life and the light of the sun. The man who has hope counts as a tremendous force, for he is full of courage for the fight, and he who is striving for eternal life is the greatest power upon earth. *Credo in . . . vitam aeternam.* Hope magnifies the chords of faith into a song of victory, which will swell ever higher until at the Last Judgement hope receives the wreath of the conqueror. We must at once endeavour to awaken hope within ourselves so that we can say in all truth that we hope for eternal life and for God's help in attaining it.

(*c*) *And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.* This is a promise which is full of encouragement. You shall not see death, until you have seen Christ; and thereafter, death becomes an impossibility, for those who have seen Him will not die for ever. Nor shall we die, who have seen Christ by faith, and have escaped the darkness of scepticism. We shall not die; we do not face Nirvana, but real infinity. We shall not die, for that feeling of cloying satiety where life is concerned is unknown to faith, which is aware of the eternal values and eternal strength abiding in the soul. When we have faith our inner world rejoices in perpetual spring, for we are conscious that God lives in us, and we in and for Him. And from morning to night we will perform all our actions, from the smallest to the greatest, for His sake.

(*d*) *And he came by the spirit into the temple.* Simeon's longing for Christ formed his preparation for the further great graces which were destined for him; the impulse of the Holy Spirit immediately enabled him to correspond with them. We have to act, both as regards our religious and our daily life, whither we are going to church or to our work, by the impulse of the Spirit, that is, from supernatural motives. We must regulate our lives not by habit and custom, dully and mechanically, but by the impulse of that Spirit Who will aid us to find and to recognize Christ, in the Church, in the Gospel, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and in the Blessed Sacrament. If we approach God in this fashion, we shall find Him, and not wander into the unknown.

(*e*) How true a guide to Christ is the Holy Spirit, and how far astray from Him our egoism and sensuality lead us! The spirit of selfishness is the more cunning of the two; it seeks its own glory even in good actions, its own advantage in prayer, its own consolation in God's service. Is it to be wondered at that we do not meet God, if we are guided by such a spirit?

(*f*) *And when his parents brought in the child Jesus . . . he also took him up in his arms.* It is not sufficient merely to see Jesus, to gaze at Him; we must take Him in our arms, keep Him, strain Him to our hearts. Who would be content merely to gaze at Him from afar? When we see a pretty child, we like to lift it up and caress it; in the same way, fervour prompts us to linger in God's presence, to speak to Him, and to hold Him to our hearts. The Blessed Sacrament has made it possible for us to fulfil this desire. Here we are able to possess and to enjoy God, in the way which most closely corresponds to our nature and our needs. Therefore the tranquil stillness of the chapel where Our Lord is dwelling in the Tabernacle will bring Him closer to us, than do the forest, the ocean, and the starry sky.

It is not sufficient to recognise truth; we must make it part and parcel of ourselves, live by it, and rejoice in its possession. How are we to secure it? By careful search, ardent longing, and love for it, and by associating ourselves with it when it is found. We must be prepared to devote the necessary time and pains to this task. Those who stress external activity at the expense of inner truth do not act rightly; it is impossible to cultivate strength, courage and perseverance in external action, if the spirit and the heart within are not concentrated upon, and absorbed in the possession of truth. The secret of force lies in the depths, of impetus in the heights of the spirit.

(*g*) *And blessed God, and said: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace; because mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* 'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart from this service rendered upon earth, where day and night I have served Thee willingly, in the winter of darkness and depression and the summer of joy and consolation. I have served Thee earnestly and trustingly. I go willingly, for Thou dost dismiss me; I came by Thy Will, I go by Thy command; I cherish the hope that Thou wilt send me to a good place. Already the fragrance from the flowery shores of eternity is wafted towards me; better things are before me, for so my Redeemer has promised.' Hail to Thee, Who art surety for our eternity! We willingly part from life and earth, for they have nothing to hold us back. This life and its possessions were merely given to us in order that we should prepare our souls by means of them for eternal life, as the bird prepares itself in the nest for flight. Our life is like the tree trunk felled in winter, which will send forth fresh shoots in the spring.

(*h*) *Because mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.* 'Because I have seen Thee, my eyes have been dimmed to all else.' And that 'else' is only a symbol, or a veil, woven so closely, for the most part, that everything behind it is obscured. But gradually there is revealed to faith, to the longing prayer, the pure heart, and the eager glance, the Countenance of Christ. Doubt and fear vanish as we gaze upon It, for it is the Face of our Brother. *Quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem tuam*—when shall we appear before Thy Presence?

This Countenance is the light of nations. It has not the volcano's fiery glare, but Its gentle radiance lightens all peoples and attracts them to Itself. 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.'

(*i*) *And Simeon . . . said to Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted.* God can also become the occasion of our fall. This would be impossible to believe, if life did not show us that our ideals can become our accusers and the graces bestowed upon us a burden. The human heart is unreliable. If one single life can show so much havoc, how much more true is this of the world in general! Here immeasurable destruction is constantly being wrought, so that we live as it were among ruins—the ruins of innocence, fidelity, honour, purity, faith, and hope. The mystery of evil is a dark and terrible force. Christ is the corner-stone, but He crushes and overwhelms those who would pull Him from His place at the head of the corner.

He wishes to be our resurrection and our life; through Him every soul is raised from the death of sin, and given life and warmth and happiness. Countless souls which are dead in sin rise up at His touch. His Sacraments are the source of life, and His words are spirit and life.

Those in whom He has taken up His abode will live for ever.

(*j*) *And thy own soul a sword shall pierce.* Simeon reveals to Our Lady the death that awaits her Son. Henceforward this knowledge is a sword in her heart, and the great sacrifice of her life. But her chief pain is caused by the thought that her Divine Son is set for the fall of many, and she suffers most bitterly from the opposition which is offered to Him by the lack of faith and the sinfulness of humanity. There are some lives which are in opposition to Christ from the beginning to the end. Our Lady crushed the head of the spirit of opposition; we must therefore free ourselves from this spirit, which is the enemy of mercy and purity, of love and magnanimity of confidence and zeal, and must remember that every time we resist the spirit of her Son we wound Our Lady's heart afresh.

WHAT IS SACRIFICE?

Our Lady walked the path of sacrifice. Simeon speaks of that sacrifice and of the light which it will kindle upon earth. Kindle this light for us also, dear Lord, that we may learn what sacrifice means.

(*a*) Sacrifice does not merely consist of suffering. There is a great deal of suffering in the animal world, for instance, but there is no sacrifice, and this remark is equally true where a large proportion of human suffering is concerned. We can only term sacrifice the renunciation of some positive good, or that suffering from which the will emerges victorious; it is conscious loss for the sake of greater gain, a fall back for a leap, deliberate obscurity for the sake of future brilliance. The martyr renounces finite existence for the sake of eternal life—the sufferer bears pain in order to practise virtue—the mourner resigns himself to his loss, and strengthens his will, by contemplating the Divine Will. Suffering accepted in this spirit produces higher spiritual values. Suffering by itself, however, distorts and disfigures the soul, unless its beauty is restored by the will which patiently acquiesces in the Divine Will. Yet it is by way of suffering and renunciation that sacrifice fashions supreme spiritual beauty.

(*b*) But why is it not equally possible to find the highest good by way of pleasure and enjoyment? Sometimes it is possible; but not always, and as a rule the attempt will not succeed. Life is primarily a struggle, a process of purification and of escape from the trammels of our lower nature; it sets self-conquest before us as our constant task, for it is impossible to acquire true virtue without the exercise of renunciation and self-immolation.

If we look into ourselves, we shall see that ignorance and selfishness are part of our nature, that our will is incomplete, and that it loves the darkness, as Holy Scripture says. Man is the slave of his passions. Our Lord Himself tells us that only the truth will make us free. But truth cannot be won except at the price of blood and sweat.

(*c*) Let us willingly make those sacrifices which are required to further the cause of our freedom. The first step towards the requisite frame of mind is made when faith impels us to bow the knee in submission before God the Eternal and Infinite. Then every act of virtue by which we lengthen the distance between ourselves and the vicious circle of our passions, and every degree, however slight, by which we correspond more closely with God's holy Will, increase our spiritual liberty. Sometimes sacrifices are asked of us which fill us with fear; sometimes even the greatest of all—death. Yet there is no need for fear; death is not the end, but the greatest step forward which we can make towards spiritual freedom. All the more reason, then, for us to see to it that this step is not a false one!

THE CALLING OF THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem. (*Matt.* ii, 1.)

(*a*) God caused the star to appear; and He also caused, by His grace, the diversity of fashions in which the light of the star affected individual hearts. Countless thousands saw it and did not attempt to follow whither it led; it shone into the souls of the three Wise Men, and they at once set forth. It is one of the mysteries of grace. There are innumerable stars in the spiritual sky, which do not draw us after them—ideals which are clouded over, so that we do not see them, and truths which we do not accept with love. We must gradually stimulate our ardour, until their radiance penetrates our souls and calls us to eager pursuit. Then we can no longer understand our former indifference; and the soul, salvation, and the Blessed Sacrament all become living joyful realities.

We must open the eyes of our soul, and hold our hearts in readiness, in order to see Our Lord's star.

(*b*) Of all those who have seen the star, the Wise Men alone set forth; the others find a hundred excuses for staying at home. Self-love shirks everything which is irksome and disagreeable, and is the natural advocate of indolence and obstinacy. Dear Lord, we do not want to become melancholy, embittered, and insensitive; help us to fire our souls. We must not permit them to be engulfed by inertia and satiety.

(*c*) Here below we live in darkness, but above our heads shine the stars of intelligence, of faith, and of inspiration. There are seasons in our lives which may be called '*tempus stellæ*'—the time of the star—and these are the holy moments and hours of profound insight, of increased ardour and fresh resolution, of enthusiasm and cheerfulness. Let us make good use of them, and cease tormenting ourselves with the questions—what will become of us? Shall we hold our own? The star which shines upon us will be our guide—let us follow it with confidence.

'WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST'

(*Matt.* ii, 2.)

(*a*) We need understanding of both the material and the spiritual worlds surrounding us; our souls need eyes. If we fling a stone at a rock, it resounds; if we strike a gong it emits quivering vibrations; if we draw a bow across the strings of a violin, we call forth notes. The same thing applies to the nerves, and to the soul as well, which can be made to vibrate, and to produce feeling, which corresponds in its degree of depth, richness, and strength to the depth, richness and strength of the instrument itself. Responsiveness to the supernatural is peculiar to the religiously disposed soul, and the result of the grace, the unction, and the degree of spiritual attainment which characterize it. God then inspires and stimulates it, and permeates it with His own spirit. Let us give a free hand to the great Artist Who is moulding us. Our souls lie before Him like taut strings, our hearts are instruments from which the Divine hand will draw melody, a song of warm, joyous, fertile life.

(*b*) How can we instil perception and understanding into the soul where higher things are concerned? We can gain insight into Heaven, by realizing the weight and burden of earthly things; understanding of light, by perceiving darkness; understanding of infinity, by consciousness of our finiteness; understanding of the longing for grace, by the pain of sorrow for sin; understanding of the passionate desire for the Saviour, by the intolerable consciousness of our propensity to evil; and understanding of the sublime majesty of God, when the feeling of our own lowliness penetrates to the depths of our soul. On the other hand, if we only see the sunshine of life, we do not see the stars; if earth is a paradise, we do not long for Heaven; if man is all in all to us, the Divine will have no charm for us; if the eyes of our soul do not gaze into the open, we go blind; and if our horizon is limited, our wings grow weak Life has no depths for the butterfly; human misery presents no problem to the baby as it plays; and the insect on the cliff's edge does not know, while it slowly creeps from one rock to another, that it is spanning centuries old frontiers with its tiny feelers. In the same way, if our souls do not possess the necessary depth of understanding, they will not have any truly profound insight into the purely spiritual world. But this will develop in us if we reverently accept the great ideas of God with a genuinely childlike spirit.

(*c*) It is in this way that we must perceive the great truths of eternity, observe the narrow confines of our life here below, and the splendour of the life that is to come. We have to understand our eternal destiny, open our souls to the fresh breezes which blow towards us from the shores of eternal life, and let the rays of its dawn disperse our darkness. We must realize that our souls are groping in the dark, in spite of the aid which philosophy has to offer, and that our intelligence is an insufficient guide when it is left to its own resources. We must confess that spiritual poverty, shallowness, and desolation are everywhere present where Divine inspiration is lacking. This higher insight is necessary, for those who are satisfied with the taste of earth will steadily cling to it, and will be unable to rise above it. If, therefore, we wish to see the Star that is Jesus, we must first of all measure the true extent of the dark shadows which overcloud human life, and only then shall we see the radiant figure of God made Man stand out against them in glorious contrast. We must see Him as He was upon earth, full of grace and strength, and must abandon ourselves to Him, not as to the representative of a philosophical system, but as to the Power of God, which bears 'them witness, by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost.' (*Heb.* ii, 4.) This is the

Fact which we wish to perceive, and which we shall perceive standing out in all Its glorious reality against the dark background of our own powerlessness and incompetence, and against the shadow-world of philosophy. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the one sweet, splendid, all-embracing Reality. . . .

THE STAR DISAPPEARS OVER JERUSALEM

(*a*) It disappeared in a strange country. This was of little consequence to those who had remained at home, but what of those who had journeyed far under its guidance and who were now left in darkness? Will they not now be assailed by doubt and confusion, while they anxiously wonder if they have not after all been deceived? No one can escape this spiritual darkness, yet we must not doubt, even when night surrounds us. Dear Lord, stay with us, when the darkness falls; we will cling to Thee, even when the stars in our sky disappear. No; we will look into Thine eyes and promise that we will not falter and retreat.

(*b*) This is the reason why the star of our consolation disappears at times. It is in order that we may be given fresh opportunities of practising the virtues of repentance, patience, humility, and gentleness, and that we may be led to turn towards God with all the greater ardour. We learn to pray well, when we are humiliated by our fellow men; renunciation of the world is made the easier by misunderstanding and persecution; Heaven appears all the sweeter, when earth is empty and desolate. Human unworthiness serves to accentuate the sublimity of the saints and the loveliness of virtue. The fires of suffering purify and light up the soul. Dear Lord, we trust our souls to Thee, the Eternal Artist, to cast and fashion according to Thy Will, and we will bear Thy touch, even if it causes us pain.

(*c*) The Wise Men turned to the Synagogue, and asked, ‘Where is he that is born king of the Jews?’ It is God’s wish that faith should question incredulity, and that purity should question vice, if incredulity and vice are legally empowered to teach. By the example of the three Wise Men, God emphatically points out that we must all bow to the legally constituted authority, even if its representatives are immoral and irreligious, for the Divine order of things requires us to do so. When purity submits to humiliation at the hands of evil, for the sake of finding the true path of faith amid illusions, it deserves its just reward, nor will it ever suffer as a result of the line of action which it has pursued. God Himself guarantees us against all harm.

‘WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS?’

(*a*) This is a brave question to ask. Brave, because the people are contemptuous and angry. What if they were to see the manger and later on the three Wise Men kneeling before it—how loud would be their laughter then! And yet the reason for the question is tremendously important—‘We have seen his star in the East.’ What sublime faith is expressed by it, a faith which is illuminated by a different light than that which shines upon the world, a faith which causes them to ask in the capital itself, amid all the splendour of Herod's court, where is the king? Earthly pomp no longer impresses them, since they have gazed upon the glory of the star in the East. Their judgement differs now from that of the world, whose magnificence they reckon as so much dust, since they have acknowledged the majesty of the supernatural. Here we see the grand style of eternity, the pathos of immortality. And we, although we are surrounded by a powerful and flourishing civilization, we likewise ask: Where is God, our Lord and King? Where are happiness, and strength, and life? Where can we find forgiveness for our sins, and eternal light? We act rightly, when we ask these questions.

(*b*) *And King Herod hearing this was troubled.* Herod did not fear the greatness of the Messias. His fear was the result of the unworthy thoughts and secret passions hidden in his heart, which leapt into life at the news of his rival's birth, just as a brood of snakes writhe and hiss when their nest is disturbed. Hatred and deceit, fear and jealousy, bloodthirstiness and cunning filled the mind and soul of the man whom the Magi faced and questioned in their search for Christ. On the one side what weakness, and on the other what strength! They are strong in their humility, which secures them against the degrading anxiety which troubles the cowardly despot. The peace of the evil doer is threatened at every step; poverty and calamity, illness and death, disfavour and humiliation—all these things torment his soul. He shuns the smallest sacrifice, endeavours to protect himself against the hard blows of fate, and shrinks from the slightest rigour. But the man of faith, who stands courageously and generously before God, enjoys constant tranquillity and peace, the peace of those who are of good will.

(*c*) *And assembling together all the chief priests and the Scribes of the people, he enquired of them where Christ should be born.* They spoke the truth and sent the Wise Men to Bethlehem. They had accurate knowledge, but they did not act upon it. And nowadays as well there exists external honour which is not based upon the practice of virtue, nobility which does not proceed from knightly feeling, and perception which has no reaction upon life. But what is the value of knowledge and of the soul, if they are not productive of love and of activity? I believe that 'knowledge is love,' and I profess that 'tanto sa, quanto fa'—I will live and love, not merely know and look on.

'AND HE SENT THEM TO BETHLEHEM'

And sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go and diligently enquire after the child. (*Matt.* ii, 8.)

(*a*) When the Wise Men obtained the answer that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, they departed. They were glad to leave Jerusalem and the court of Herod; in the same way, the believer willingly escapes from the society of sceptics, which appears to him as a bleak and loveless waste, where winter reigns eternally, with no prospect of spring. The glitter of worldly splendour is hard and metallic; how warm and intimate does the true home of the soul, God's presence, appear in contrast with it! The world loses its beauty when neither God, nor the souls who love Him, nor eternal hope are present;

then it is that the star in the East disappears, and we may say with the Psalmist, 'For better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.' (*Ps.* lxxxiii, 11, 12.)

(*b*) *And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.* Once clear of the palace, and out upon the dark road again, their souls overflow with fresh joy, and God lights them on their way. We, too, can find the life and joy which we need in God alone, in all its fulness. In Him are fused and mingled supreme bliss and perfect beauty; He supersedes all earthly attractions. The inner life and joy in God can accompany us in all our journeyings, absorb us and overflow into all the manifestations of our personality. Then it is that we can carry our joy in God into our entire activity, and bring beauty and joy into places where they have been non-existent.

(*c*) They went their way, and forgot Jerusalem, and Herod, and the criticism which greeted their undertaking. They did not waste their strength upon wordy battles and disputes. Let us profit by the lesson they taught. Our world resembles a flock of chirping, restless sparrows. The clamour of voices deafens, but hardly edifies us. There is a continual chattering about what is true and what is false, and who is right and who is wrong; but very, very few succeed in attaining that which is best—that is to say, in increasing their joyousness of heart. We must not harass our fellow men, but edify and elevate them, for it is impossible to conquer the world merely by means of intelligence. Let us make haste, then, to live! Our lives will be our victory over the world.

THE WISE MEN IN BETHLEHEM

And behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them until it came and stood over where the child was. . . . And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother. And falling down they adored him. (*Matt.* ii, 9-11.)

(*a*) The prayer of the Magi is the fruit of their powerful faith. They do not pray from custom, or because it is the fashion. Their prayer is the labour of those striving souls who have blazed a trail for themselves over stony ways in the teeth of the world. They see a Child and His Mother, a poor hearth, and the small homely objects needed in the work of the house—and the star is sufficient revelation to them. They kneel and worship. Is there a greater abyss, than that which divides a tiny child from God? This does not trouble them. Actually we are surrounded by such abysses; in whatever direction we turn, we see infinity, and endless space beyond the stars. Our souls are surrounded by eternity, as the lotus blossom which floats on the surface of the waters is surrounded by the ocean. Let us by all means adore God when we contemplate the marvels of nature, but still more let us adore Him at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem, before the Blessed Sacrament.

(*b*) They adore in profound humility and bow before the Divine decree. They are aware that this worship is a great grace and privilege. And it is not a burden to them. The God Whom they have found is a tiny Child, full of a gracious and irresistible charm which compels confidence and love. They are able to address Him without difficulty. Near this Child the proudest become humble, and the superficial and careless plumb the real depths of life. The more lowly our salutation to the Babe, the higher will He raise up to Himself, for it is in the true wisdom of humility that He finds His pleasure.

(*c*) Their adoration was full of loving surrender. It would not have been astonishing if their hearts had ceased to beat at that supreme moment, and if they had sighed forth their souls with their homage at Jesus' feet. Their hearts were filled with His grace, and He gave them, in exchange for their gifts, the spiritual gold of purity of soul, the frankincense of adoration, and the myrrh of courage in sacrifice. Dear Jesus, Whom we see typified in the gifts of the Magi, Thou art our greatest treasure, the Centre of our adoration and sacrifice! For Thy sake we will renounce everything, and suffer nothing to remain in our souls which will prove the least obstacle to Thy presence. The sweet memory of Thy hidden presence amongst us will accompany us, as the pillar of fire went before the Chosen People in the desert. Thou art our pillar of fire, and from Thy wounded Hands we pluck the myrrh which will preserve us from corruption and decay. And then we, too, in our turn, wish to offer Thee our gifts, our gold and frankincense and myrrh!

THE GIFTS OF THE WISE MEN

(*a*) They brought Him gold, and hailed Him as King. They did not look for His crown, because they knew that His head was radiant with the glory of the star which had led them; nor did they look for His throne, because they knew that it consisted of human hearts, and that

Our Lady's loving adoration replaced the homage of a court. I adore Thee, sublime Majesty of God, and know that the adoration and bended knees of the worshippers before Thine altars offer Thee a homage before which all earthly state pales into insignificance.

(*b*) They brought incense, and adored Him as their God. His Godhead was not manifest, but they believed in the star which He had sent. To us, the personality of Jesus, and His work, offer sufficient grounds for faith. His life shines before us like a star; we see the earth burst into bloom beneath His feet, and the glorious company of the souls which He has redeemed and sanctified following in His footsteps. The incomparable beauty of the moral world, as Jesus created it, is in itself sufficient proof of His divine mission. And it is the holy Church of Christ, beautiful with the chastity of the virgins, glorious with the blood of the martyrs, which binds us to Him.

(*c*) They offered myrrh; in Jesus they honoured the Man of Sorrows. They were full of profound sympathy, and expressed it by their gifts. Such are the feelings of those tender and compassionate souls who suffer from their pity and grief for the sorrows of Christ. The reverence of the Magi was full of the profoundest humility; it was the reverence of love. Such, for instance, was the emotion experienced by St. Julia Falconieri before the Blessed Sacrament. (Cf. Faber, *The Blessed Sacrament*.)

ON MISSIONS

The feast of Epiphany summons us to the Crib of the Infant Jesus, Who calls all nations to Himself and Who came to give light to the peoples. It is then that we ask ourselves why it is that this manifestation has not been more complete, and why it is that its light has not reached many more millions of human beings? Upon what factors do the expansion and the consolidation of Our Lord's sovereignty depend?

(*a*) The Word became Flesh; Truth in human form turns to human hearts, is accepted by human reason, needs human enthusiasm to fight for It and human tongues to proclaim It. In the first place, therefore, a host of devoted souls is required, to carry It through the world and to be Its mouthpiece. Epiphany summons together all those whose hearts are aglow with zeal, and asks them, in the Name of Jesus, 'Who will give Me strong, pure souls, filled with the spirit of the prophets, careless of earthly interests, promotion, and distinction, who are ready to fight for the sake of truth without hope of reward? Who will train apostles and messengers to carry My words to the ends of the earth?' Zeal, then, and readiness for sacrifice are primarily required for the propagation of the faith.

(*b*) What else is needed? Money and in great quantities. It is as it were a tax which we pay as members of the Kingdom of God. The sum is not fixed, and there are no collectors and no offices to ensure its being paid; our zeal dictates the amount of our contribution. The more we give according to our ability, the more widely the Kingdom of God will be enabled to expand in distant countries. It is obvious that the propagation of the Gospel is adversely affected by the growing poverty of the Christian countries, to which must be added the growth of scepticism. This very poverty is the result of those principles which are opposed to the spirit of Christianity, and which will bring about decline and decay if they find a place in the social and economic life of the world. Here again it is to the zealous clergy and laity that the appeal is made to foster Christian principles in social and economic life, and to strain every nerve in order to get them adopted by the people in their struggles. We need true Christians, men and women alike, who really love the people and will bravely combat the pagan spirit in all its manifestations.

(*c*) Can there be any higher aim than that of desiring to ensure the happiness of all races by extending to them the ineffable privileges of Christianity? For no other cause have more difficulties been overcome, greater sacrifices made, or more blood shed. We can understand this if we grasp the full importance of three things: love of the immortal soul, hatred of sin, and reverence for grace. The soul of St. Francis Xavier bore the mark of this glowing love for souls, which characterizes the heroic virtue of all apostles, in conjunction with hatred of the sin which destroys souls. The strength of Christianity finds both its mode of expression and its gauge in the love of souls. This is the reason for the foundation of parishes amidst the turmoil and traffic of town life, amidst adversity and struggles; it is the reason for the existence of churches and institutions, and for the labours of art and of science. The Pope upon the throne of St. Peter, the cardinals, bishops, and priests are appointed for the sake of souls. Synods and councils, and all the tremendous labour which precedes them, are the result of this zeal for souls. It is for the sake of souls that the members of religious orders pass their lives of penance in the strict discipline of the cloister. And all Our Lord's mighty love, His first prayer and His last sigh were and are for souls. Christ came on earth to redeem sinners —each of us can here regard him or herself as the first and greatest—and He shed His Blood and suffered His bitter agony for the sake of each individual soul. He abides in the Blessed Sacrament for each soul alone, and waits for each soul alone. He is the wonderful bridegroom of our poor, sinful souls, and because of His example the Church's love and esteem for souls are incomparable. What will she not do in order to win them for Christ? I will learn from the Church to love my own soul and that of my neighbour as I should, and therefore to avoid and struggle against one thing above all—mortal sin.

EPIPHANY, THE FEAST OF CATHOLICITY

(*a*) Christ founded the Church as the kingdom of God upon earth, and entrusted to Peter the keys of this kingdom, which has to be absolutely catholic, that is to say, universal. Universal, because it is the kingdom of the propagation of truth and goodness, universal, because it is the kingdom of God. Catholicity is one of the characteristics of our redemption by Christ, as opposed to the chaos of paganism and the exclusiveness of the Jews. Paganism had spread widely, it is true, but it had spead in the multiplicity of error and in thousands of purely local forms and cults. Here theology was replaced by poetry, and there were poets without end. Judaism on the other hand was the religion of a single race, and possessed no apostles.

But the Church is as universal as sunshine, and truth, and Christ's love, and the benefits which He has bestowed upon us. Let us love God's kingdom, then, and appreciate the variety of races, nations, and languages which it embraces. Just as individuals exist within the bounds of the family, nations exist within the bounds of the Church. It is senseless to ask whether we primarily belong to the national or to the religious group. The insignificant disputes centring around questions of nationality must not be carried into the sanctuary. Let us preach in a language which the people will understand, and always keep before our eyes the Apostolic ideal of the Catholic Church. Those who subordinate religion to political interests darken the rays of the Star of Epiphany. Dear Lord, may Thy kingdom come here upon earth and teach us barbarians to be men, in the real sense of the word.

(*b*) The Church is obliged to be universal, because the spirit uniting her is the grace of God, which appears to all men. Her very name—*ecclesia*—means 'calling together.' God calls us all to her, and by her. She is the organ of the Divine call; from her it resounds through the world, and from her go forth apostles and missionaries. The three kings represented the nations before the Crib, but we can likewise see others surrounding It in spirit—the guardian angels of the Apostles, of SS. Peter and Paul, and of the countless nameless ones who laboured and died for Christ. We can see, too, the angels of the Apostles of Europe, of St. Patrick, St. Remigius, St. Boniface, St. Stephen of Hungary, St. Olaf, and those of the missionaries of later ages, of St. Francis Xavier and the Chinese martyrs, and those of the glowing fervent souls who carried on their apostolate by prayer, such as St. Theresa, for instance. All these people, in spite of their diversity of character, personality, and strength, shared in common great longings, sufferings, and sacrifices, and a tremendously high estimation of the value of human souls. '*Dabo tibi gentes*'—Nations were promised to the Redeemer; and the hearts of apostles plead: '*da nobis animas*'—'Give us souls!'

What visions are revealed to us by the magic light of the Star of Epiphany! We see a hidden force go out from its rays, the force which shattered the world of antiquity and overturned systems and kingdoms. That force is the inestimable value and the absolute equality, in God's eyes, of all souls. We must to-day draw an inspiration from this force, which will help us to fashion a better and more beautiful world. We must seek out souls and save them, because love commands us to do so. We must each of us be an apostle in our own circle; and the knowledge that we are bound to influence our surroundings must spur us on to make good use of this influence always, by leading the way to what is right and by encouraging others in it.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and sending killed all the men children that were in Bethlehem and in all the borders thereof. (*Matt.* ii, 16.)

(*a*) Side by side with the radiant Babe of Bethlehem we see the blood-dabbled little faces of the children who fell victims to Herod's fear and wrath, and the glorious hymn of the angels finds a different echo in the grief of the bereaved mothers. These babies had to give up life which had barely begun; but their fate was glorious, since they died for Christ, and in His stead. What happiness would be ours if we could receive but one of the blows aimed at Him by sacrilegious hands; and these tiny children saved Him from death! It is our highest privilege to suffer and to die for Christ, and life has nothing greater to offer than union with Him by heroic love. Let us therefore beg of Our Lord the joy and privilege of suffering and of sacrifice for His sake and in His name.

(*b*) Yet suffering is hard and distasteful, tears are bitter, and both wrest groans from us. God expects this. He does not wish us to be insensible to pain—that is beyond our power. He does not forbid us to shudder, nor does He prevent the lowering clouds of affliction and sadness from hanging over us. No; since we are human, our hearts will shudder, and our nerves tremble; but we can keep our will conformed to His. With this God is satisfied. And when the storm clears, we must smile anew.

(*c*) Who is it who stabs the tiny children? Herod—that is to say, sin and passion. Persecution can both destroy souls and make martyrs, passion can both dishonour a man or make a saint of him. Everything depends upon the way in which the will deals with the assaults made upon it by passion.

Our souls must control our passions, and must oppose surrender to our animal instincts. We must be ever on the alert and ready to fight against our passions and ignoble feelings. We are bound to conquer in the end, even if the body is destroyed in the struggle.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

And after they were departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt. (*Matt.* ii, 13.)

(*a*) By the Incarnation God the Son entered into the course of history, and in His earthly life the factors of history were given free play—human weakness, and power, and passions, sin and injustice, sanctity and patience. God made use of the natural order of things to serve His purposes. He gave Jesus a Mother, and a solicitous foster-father, who carried Him away when danger threatened. In the same way, God cares for us, but we must make use in our turn of our natural forces and capacities, in order to overcome the difficulties with which we are faced. Struggle and endeavour have their place in God's plan, as an aid to progress and development. When we triumph over difficulties, we enrich our spirit and our knowledge, our industrial and scientific and economic life. Consider for a moment the resignation with which Our Lady travels across the desert into exile; the way is a hard one to tread, but she carries Jesus with her; and this is the solution of all life's problems. We have to possess Jesus, no matter what the difficulties and struggles amid which we may happen to live. Let me first ask myself: Do I carry Jesus in my heart? If I can answer yes, nothing else need cause me anxiety.

(*b*) *But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel. . . . But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither . . . and retired into the* *quarters of Galilee.* (*Matt.* ii, 20-22.) St. Joseph waited patiently and perseveringly in Egypt. He did not worry incessantly about the future. He typifies *caritas fidelis*, that loyal love which is content to suffer, wait, and persevere. The sweetness of love has a childlike, its loyalty an angelic quality. When love is at peace, loyalty relaxes; when love grows weary, loyalty keeps watch. Loyalty is the guardian angel of love. We only love truly, when we are capable of love amidst hardship and sacrifice, that is, when we are loyal.

(*c*) St. Joseph did not hesitate to follow the angel's counsel. He shows us how to co-operate with Divine inspiration, and acts by the light both of faith and of reason. This chapter of the Gospel proves that Divine inspiration requires from us in our turn our wholehearted and intelligent co-operation. Our faith and hope in God's assistance must not prevent us from taking advantage of the opportunities which present themselves to us, nor from pursuing our aims with tireless vigour. In this way we shall avoid the danger of falling into routine. The heart is not a machine; yet even good intentions can become mechanical through habit. We must therefore constantly renew the spirit and consciousness of our moral and religious activity, and revive that solicitous, tender feeling which characterizes the *caritas prima*, the ' first love ' of Revelation. (*Apoc.* ii, 4.)

THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

And his parents went up every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch. And when he was twelve years old, they went up *to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast.* (*Luke* ii 41, 42.)

(*a*) Jesus goes up to the Temple joyfully, and fills the House of God with the fragrance of His zeal and His devotion. At His first visit He had been a Babe; now He returns in the bloom of His youth. The Temple is truly consecrated for the first time by His divine presence. In the same way churches are consecrated by prayer and sacrifice, art and beauty, but above all by the presence and spirit of Jesus. When we go to church, we go in the spirit of prayer, and we seek His spirit. A church receives an additional consecration from the adoration, thanksgiving, and petition of those who pray within it. Let us go to church in this spirit and pray for an increase of it. We must remember while we are at prayer the fervent devotion and recollection of the Child Jesus.

(*b*) Jesus loved to visit the Temple. He felt, as no one else could do, how beautiful are the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts, and His Soul longed and fainted for the courts of the Lord. He approached His Father's altar lovingly and joyfully. His Soul was at home here, and He tasted the happiness of those who dwell in the House of God. He was absorbed in God, and saw in spirit upon the altar the sacrifice which soon would be required of Him. In our churches Jesus is 'in the Temple'—let us approach Him in this spirit, absorbed in Him and by Him, and exclaim with the Curé of Ars, '*Je l'avise, il m'avise.*' Let us unite our love, our joy, and our sacrifice with His!

(*c*) The prayer of Jesus in the Temple was like frankincense; so precious a fragrance had never yet ascended there. The time had come when He could say, 'Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire . . . burnt offering and sin offering thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come . . . that I should do thy will.' (*Ps.* xxxix, 7-9.) Jesus established the true worship of God, which embraces man in his entirety, with his understanding, emotions, and will, his hopes and longings, the worship of God in 'spirit and in truth.' This worship is threatened by the twofold danger of a lapse into puritanical formality and rationalism, or else into careless familiarity. Our Lord, however, gives us the example of the most profound reverence; when we are near Him we are conscious of the holiness of God's House, and remember the words, 'Reverence my sanctuary. I am the Lord.' (*Lev.* xix, 30.) Yet fear does not come first in the Heart of Jesus; It abounds in love and gratitude. In this Heart is concentrated the prayer of the whole world. It focuses the feeble rays of our praise and directs them towards God in one single brilliant beam of light; It offers Him the sacrifice of thousands of lives and intones all the praises of the prophets. And then consider the prayer of Jesus, now soaring heavenwards like an eagle, now spreading its wings of intercession protectingly over us. It is in this way that Jesus prays unceasingly before the Blessed Sacrament. Let us try to purify the eyes of our soul, that we may see and understand.

(*d*) Jesus is present at the sacrifice; He understands, as does no one else, its profound significance; in His mind He sees the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, Melchizedech, and those of later ages, which were only symbolic. His Heart is the one true altar and sacrifice, and He whispers 'Behold I come. . . .'

The longing of the Saints for martyrdom is but a feeble shadow of that longing for sacrifice which shone out from the eyes and the radiant face of the twelve-year-old Boy. He stood at the beginning of the life which was to save the world and showed us how we in our turn must prepare for our life and our vocation. Love of sacrifice is the dawn which foreshadows the glorious day of a rich and active life spent in God's service.

JESUS REMAINS BEHIND IN JERUSALEM

And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem. And his parents knew it not. (*Luke* ii, 43.)

(*a*) For three weary days Mary and Joseph searched for the Child. These three days and two sleepless nights seemed an eternity to them. Where is He, why does He keep away from us, is this a punishment, or a trial of our faith and love? Such probably were their anxious questionings. Their hearts and conscience were pure and guiltless, their souls abounded in grace, and yet we see them weep and lament. We lose Jesus if we commit mortal sin; but we also lose Him when He withdraws the consciousness of His dear and consoling presence from us, in the hours of despondency, and spiritual dryness. Sometimes we deserve this by our pettiness, unfaithfulness, or indifference; sometimes it is a trial of our constancy. Whatever the cause may be, let us persevere, and renew ourselves in spirit.

(*b*) How do His parents seek Jesus? (i) *Humbly.* We are not worthy of God's condescension; He is the

Lord, Who comes and goes when it seems good to Him. He comes to us out of infinity; is it astonishing if our souls sometimes lose their true light, and, mothlike, are dazzled by the glare of conceit, or of selfishness and sensuality? (ii) *Patiently.* The soil of life is stony, and difficult to plough; our nature is finite, and therefore inclined to weakness; the will and the emotions are subject to wavering and to hesitation, and at times our spirit flags and sinks. We need *inspirata patientia,* inspired patience, which will teach us forbearance and courage when we contemplate our faults and failings. (iii) *Diligently.* Their whole being was directed towards the one aim, that of finding Jesus. Let us take example by Joseph and Mary, and search for Jesus ceaselessly, tirelessly and painstakingly. A search like this will consecrate and transform our whole life.

(*c*) *And it came to pass that, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions.* We shall not find Jesus amongst our relations, amongst flesh and blood, nor amid the noise and tumult of the streets, but in the sanctuary, in quietness and solititude. It is there that we must seek for Him. It is by way of contrition, penance, recollection, and withdrawal from all distractions that we approach Him. We find Him in the House of God, in the Church which He has founded; let us take a place in the community of the saints, and like them refresh ourselves with the sense of God's presence. Here we find our stronger brethren—St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Theresa—who will bring us nearer to Him. Let us cling to them. What joy we feel when we find Him! How sweet it is to find Our Lord again, to rejoice in Him, to lose ourselves in Him. And how sweet, too, to watch the Divine Child as He listens and asks questions of the doctors, and to watch the happiness of His Mother as she catches sight of Him, speaks to Him, and leads Him away with her!

(*d*) *And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? . . . And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* Union with God in all the circumstances of life characterizes the soul of Jesus. His Human Nature is filled with Divine grace. He is always about His Father's business. As a Boy at Nazareth, as a Man in Jerusalem, on Mount Tabor and on Calvary, He was conscious of this union. This is what is meant by His words at the moment of His bitterest suffering, face to face with the supreme sacrifice, 'Father, not my will . . .' This union is everywhere present to Him. God is constantly with Him. Even when He had lost His Mother, He was not alone. We grow desolate, darkness overpowers us, and we lose heart when we become conscious of loneliness. We are not self-sufficient, we need help and support, and collapse without them; but with God's help we can scale walls and climb mountains.

'AND HE WENT DOWN WITH THEM TO NAZARETH'.

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. (*Luke* ii, 51.) Nazareth is the divine pattern upon which our everyday life is to be formed. It is the centre of pilgrimage for those who wish to live devoutly, but who are prevented by force of circumstance from achieving great things. It is the refuge of the idealists who find ordinary life irksome. The soul does not age here. It is a treasure house, a house of gold and joy. What is its spirit?

(*a*) The spirit of home. It is not governed by the weight of laws, but by love, willingness, attentiveness, and good will. The home is not a barracks, a house of detention whence the dwellers escape with a sense of release; for even if we are turned away from home, we always creep back. And the home is not a hotel, for there the thought of profit is paramount, and we pay for every smile which greets us. Nor is it the hospitable house of our friends, even where we are kindly accepted for a few days, but which does not belong to us. Home is the dwelling place which is ours, where avidity is unknown and where unselfish care surrounds us. It is this spirit, the spirit of Nazareth, which we must carry into our relations with God—love, willingness, unselfishness, surrender. Let us try to realize that we live by Him and in Him, that His truth, His goodness, His infinite beauty and justice are the home of our reason, our heart, and our will. God is our Father's House, where it is good for us to dwell.

(*b*) At Nazareth there was always a great deal to be done, and it usually consisted of little, unimportant, everyday tasks. We must not be afraid of work if we want to understand the Spirit of Nazareth. It does not encourage idleness. Life consists of innumerable little things, of heartbeats, smiles, a helping hand held out, the incidents of our daily work, the renewal of good intentions, love, thought for others. . . . God alone is great, everything else is insignificant; and even that which wears the semblance of greatness is composed of a multitude of petty things. The greatness of any form of art depends upon the manner in which little things are adapted and fashioned, and even in human life therefore the element of insignificance does not check the development of greatness and beauty; on the contrary, the beauty of the whole springs from the spiritual rhythm and harmony of the various subordinate elements; and to this end we must work at perfecting the tiniest detail with the loftiness and inspiration of the great artist. Our daily prayers, our duties towards our profession and towards the state, our emotions, our conduct towards our neighbours, our manner of speech, our very expression and carriage—each of these things is in itself insignificant, yet viewed as a whole they form the resplendent mosaic of a great and beautiful life. They are a work of art in the spirit of Nazareth.

(*c*) The spirit of Nazareth is the spirit of piety. Piety springs from the filial disposition which sees a father in God, brethren in the saints, God in parents, and Christ in mankind. A disposition like this is not hard, nor is it frivolous and selfish. It is capable of converse with God, seeks His presence, and takes advantage of everything, even the tiniest things of life, which will enable it to approach Him more closely. The thought of God permeates its every action, and the censure passed upon men by the Apostle, because they are ‘ lovers of themselves, haughty, proud, without affection, unmerciful, without kindness, and lovers of pleasures more than of God,’ does not apply to it. I, too, will try in the spirit of reverence to look upon all men as the children of God, and to treat them accordingly, so that I may perceive the thoughts of God presented before me in human shape.

(*d*) Jesus loved His parents, and Nazareth, and His home with its courtyard and little garden, and the neighbourhood. He was full of good will towards His neighbours and towards the village children especially. All this is an indication of His spirit of piety. The saints, too, are characterized by a great and genuine sympathy for humanity, a sympathy which has an almost childlike quality about it, and they bring love and cordiality and great kindness into the service of their neighbour. Let us cultivate this spirit in our relations with our family, our home, and our country, preserving in them a filial attitude. And this in a special manner where the Church is concerned. In this childlike spirit let us adorn her altars with flowers, sing her hymns, celebrate her feasts, gain the indulgences which she offers, and reverence her servants. We must hold dear the sound of her bells, the roll of her organs, her holy water and oils and relics. And we must not look upon our country as a mere political conception, but as a synthesis of noble human feelings, as God's idea, and we have therefore to love and serve it accordingly.

‘AND JESUS ADVANCED IN WISDOM AND AGE AND GRACE WITH GOD AND MEN’

(*Luke* ii, 52.)

Supernatural life means the employment of all our powers of thought, emotion, volition and action in the spirit of faith and at the prompting of faith. At Nazareth we see three people who are filled with this spirit, and they are Our Lord, His Mother, and St. Joseph. Let us consider the way in which their supernatural life was manifested.

(*a*) In their view of life. Besides the sunshine, the little house at Nazareth is illuminated by a light which shows us in the 'Carpenter's Son' the Son of God, Who weaves sublime and hidden virtues into the most ordinary actions. The slightest services which He rendered to His parents, such as fetching water from the well, or helping His foster-father in His work, are of eternal inestimable value. Everywhere the Child is accompanied by His Divine dignity; whatever He handles and does is handled and done by the Son of God. It is not the greatness of His actions, but the fact that it is He Who performs them, which gives them their merit and the standard by which they are to be measured. We know that the primary value of moral actions depends upon the personality of the performer. Beside the Child we see His Mother. How does she appear in the light of faith? Faith shows her as the Mother of God, with whom the consort of Augustus cannot be named in the same breath, and yet her transcendent virtues and merits are hidden beneath the humility and simplicity of the carpenter's wife.

(*b*) Let us look further into the life and destiny of this family. God loved the house of Nazareth, more than anything in Heaven or upon earth, but He did not on this account exempt its inhabitants from hard work or anxiety; Providence kept a special watch over them, and yet they were not spared hardships or struggles. They did not live like St. Anthony in the wilderness, to whom the raven brought food; they had to work for their daily bread. When they were fugitives, God did not part the waters of the Nile for them; if they wanted to cross they had to search for a boat or a bridge. In the desert the hot yellow sand which tormented them was not changed into a flowery garden. The life of the holiest souls is usually dull and commonplace, yet at the back of this seeming monotony there exists that supernatural life which, when we are in a state of sanctifying grace, bases its activity on the impulses of faith. St. Paul tells us to do everything for God—even our eating and drinking. This is the spirit which we too must cultivate within ourselves.

(*c*) Nazareth was the home of warm and loving hearts. For us the supernatural life is the source of new and profound feelings towards God, the Church, and our fellowmen. The soul which is permeated by the spirit of faith clings to God, and feels as safe as a child in the arms of its mother. It lays all its sorrows, troubles, and struggles before Him, and regains complete tranquillity. It is so aware of God's presence that it can speak to Him and think of Him frequently and with ease, and constantly find fresh consolation, ardour, and inspiration in Him. This state is known as the spirit of prayer. It is the spirit of energy and of consolation, of awe and of boundless reverence. It helps us to understand when we read in the life of St. Margaret Mary that she liked to do her work upon her knees, for she was everywhere conscious of the presence of God. It is not intended that we should look upon the natural order as the be-all and end-all of existence; nature has many good things to offer us, but the majority are only present in an embryonic condition, and have to be developed and perfected by hard work and struggles. Life according to nature is a wild shoot, on to which we must graft supernatural life, if it is to bear worthy fruit.

THE SPIRIT OF CHILDHOOD

Let us live as children in the house of our Father. We cannot always remain children, but we must keep some of the traits of childhood, traits which will make us gentle, not weak, simple, not foolish, humble, and not helpless. Childhood is characterized by directness, trustfulness, and an affectionate and unquestioning nature.

(*a*) This childlike spirit is the spirit of Christianity. We lovingly murmur 'Our Father,' and rejoice that God is not displeased by our confidence, but that it is on the contrary agreeable to Him, so that He even said, 'Unless ye become as little children . . .' How different is the spirit prevailing in the temples of paganism, and even in the Holy of Holies! Here Jehovah reveals Himself as the stern and inexorable ruler. The Jews were accustomed to harshness and to little intimacy, and their hearts were numbed by the majesty of the Eternal. Many Christians, even, forget the Heart of Jesus; for them, the House of God is a frigid place, Christ an unattainable ideal, and the saints superhuman figures. Magdalen did not feel like this. . . .

Let us realize that the Church is the true House of God, filled with genuine reverence and with winning tenderness. She holds no heartless dogmas; God dwells among us in her sacraments, and in a special manner where the Holy Eucharist is concerned. Her dear sanctuaries, gay with flowers, her devotions, particularly devotion to the Sacred Heart, with its expiatory fervour, the little sacred tokens which adorn the homes of her children—all these things promote the spirit of childlike love. In her feasts we accompany Our Lord's life anew. How good it is for us to be here!

(*b*) The spirit of childhood greatly benefits the soul.

(i) In the first place, by it we are enabled to honour God as we should. Without it, our hearts tend towards distrust, anxiety, cowardice, and suspicion of God's love and mercy. Without it we lack the right conception of God, and do not approach Him in that humble frame of mind which leaves all the affairs and anxieties of life in His hands, and we lose all our eagerness and enthusiasm in His service. All these things come to us from the impulse of the childlike spirit.

(ii) By it we benefit our fellow-men as well, for we look upon them as brothers and enter into their joys, and what is more difficult, their sorrows.

(iii) It is inexpressibly beneficial to us. If we possess the childlike spirit, we never feel desolate or forsaken, for we know that we are in the arms of a most great and most loving Power, with Which we are connected and Whose life we live. It gives us confidence in our progress. It teaches us to accept our sacrifices at God's hands and to forget ourselves. May this sweet spirit, which casts out fear and proves that we are indeed the sons of God, be our strength and our joy, and may we ever live by it and in it.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS IN NAZARETH

And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth. (*Matt.* ii, 23.) There are many people who do not understand what Jesus did during those thirty years at Nazareth; some even consider that He lived in India, studying the wisdom of the Brahmins. And yet the Gospel tells us quite clearly what He did—He lived a holy life, and showed us the significance, the content, and the profound depth of a life lived in this manner.

(*a*) Every tranquil, pure, laborious life is filled with God. The silence of winter is full of tranquil, restrained energy; the silence at the Elevation throbs with vehement adoration. It was in just such a tranquil and unobtrusive fashion that the life of Jesus was passed, a life which nevertheless was fully vital, conscious, and full of emotion. Let us believe this, try to grasp what it means, and to feel our way towards God in a spirit of faith. The world is full of Him; spiritual beauty, every discovery in the domain of nature and of science—all these things reveal His Countenance from a fresh aspect. Our soul's longings and anxieties are reflections of God. He is Spirit and Life, in Him we live and move and have our being, and if we honestly seek for Him we are sure to find Him. If we are asked what Jesus did during those thirty years in Nazareth, we must answer that He passed them in the depths of the inner life, and that He might have continued to live in that fashion for all eternity.

(*b*) Jesus worked at His trade and in this way fulfilled His eternal vocation. Everything which He did—His comings and goings, His carving and hammering—was done *sub specie æternitatis*, under the sign of eternity, and had an eternal value; His Father looked down upon Him from Heaven, was well pleased in all that He did, and guided Him by His Will. The Soul of Jesus was filled with the most spotless and straightforward intentions; no shadow of unworthy feeling could ever tarnish the purity of His outlook and spiritual atmosphere. For Jesus, life was not a noisy huckstering fair where sharp dealing is the order of the day, nor a circus display of sham strength; He subordinated His work, His ability, and His experience to the one aim of showing us how to become children of God. 'He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace.' We must firmly believe that in every type of life there can be but one aim for all knowledge and learning and struggles, and that is the fashioning of a soul which is lofty, pure, and truly free. It is our character, and not our career, which counts.

(*c*) This lofty and exalted life was at the same time full of sweetness and intimacy. The home at Nazareth was as sacred as a church, and yet full of warmth and familiarity, presided over by the loving care of the Mother. Our Lord had a foster father, a hard-working, struggling man who taught Him His trade, and the toils and fatigue of both were allayed by the Blessed Virgin, the tender housewife and mother. The spiritual sublimity of that quiet home did not preclude these simple human delights. They have a place in all religious life. Nazareth, and what it stands for, is necessary to humanity. The thirty years which Jesus spent there emphasize this. *Magna vixit, nihil dixit.* His life there was sublime, but veiled in silence.

ST. JOSEPH, THE FAITHFUL SERVANT (I)

(*a*) St. Joseph is the faithful servant. A servant is anyone who works for others, or who exerts himself in the name and interest of others. Here upon earth St. Joseph was the shadow of God the Father; he carried out the Divine directions and decrees, and had no thought for himself. In this he resembled Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, who was sent to distant countries in the interests of his master, and who was entirely trustworthy. The Gospel has nothing to tell us about St. Joseph; he stands in the background of the Divine mysteries, and yet devout people are instinctively aware of the wealth and sanctity of his inner life. We too must serve God with faithfulness and constancy, and be, like St. Joseph, His faithful servants. This is man's noblest title.

(*b*) St. Joseph, the faithful servant, served God to the fullest extent of all his spiritual and bodily powers; his soul was filled with troubles, cares, and anxieties, yet God enlightened Him: 'Fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife . . .'; 'Fly into Egypt, and be there . . .'; 'being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee.' He had to earn bread for the Son of God by his own exertions, yet this manual labour sanctified his soul and brought him ever closer to God. Devout people, the artists of the Middle Ages, members of religious orders—all these understand this. And we can all imitate St. Joseph in this, no matter what our station and circumstances may be.

(*c*) Tranquillity, humility, and submissiveness characterize this faithful servant. His calling kept him within its own narrow bounds; he played no part in public affairs, and yet his life was full and rich, because it was steeped in God and in His grace. St. Bonaventure tells us, '*Vita Dei adipiscitur per fidem summæ veritatis, per amorem summæ dilectionis, per imitationem summæ virtutis*'; that is to say, our life is sanctified by belief in the highest truth, by love of the highest good, and by imitation of the highest example of virtue; in a word, by ardour in faith and energy in action.

ST. JOSEPH, THE FAITHFUL SERVANT (II)

St. Joseph, in his rough leather apron, with his sleeves rolled back from his horny, toil-worn hands, represents manual labour, and stands beside the Master, Who prayed and taught. Manual labour and intellectual activity are one and the same thing, and together constitute our earthly task.

(*a*) In the physical world countless forces are at work in the shape of water, electricity, and steam. The mountains and the grain of sand are both the products of great forces, and every type of bird and beast labours when it fulfils the conditions of its life. Human labour covers a wider field, and ranges in varying intensity from the simple picking of ripe fruit to harnessing the forces of nature by means of throbbing, roaring machinery. Indeed, labour is the foundation of man's power, because it makes him the lord of the world, and enables him to modify nature at his pleasure and to subordinate things to his particular aims. Until man engages in constructive and creative labour, he is incomplete, and cannot fully manifest the consciously independent and creative side of his nature. "Art is an effort to make life self-conscious. Nature has made only creatures: art has made men," wrote Schiller. We prefer to put it in this way, that it is by virtue of conscious creative work that man becomes more free, more independent of the forces of nature. This is what God intended work to do for us. We must value the Divine idea and work it out in ourselves, developing and employing all our energies and talents in accordance with it, because we know that by so doing we shall become more free and more lofty. We must thirst after life and after a rich and full existence.

(*b*) What is the greatest of all labour? The answer is—self-fashioning, because by it man is developed from the mere object into the subject, and acquires a personality, with the result that he is no longer unconsciously submissive to the pressure of nature and of his appetites. In this work of fashioning our consciousness and our personality, Our Lord stands before us as our ideal. He shows us our great task, the overcoming of all that is material, worldly, and evil; those who neglect this duty will lose their free and spiritual nature, and will be failures as human beings in the truest and highest sense of the word. Spiritual passivity is the reason for the non-success of the great proportion of our endeavours, and for the slight spiritual progress which we make. We do not work deliberately enough, nor upon a psychological basis, that is to say, in the fashion which corresponds to our spiritual constitution.

(*c*) What are the forces which will help us in this work?

(i) *Grace.* God inspires us, sends us powerfully stimulating ideas, and spurs us on in the endeavour to resemble Our Lord.

(ii) *Our personality*, and the good qualities we possess, which must be stimulated in order to overcome our lower impulses.

(iii) *Nature*, which offers us the relaxation and refreshment of which we stand in need, and in which we renew our physical and spiritual strength for the daily struggle.

(iv) *A good environment*, which imbues us with its own spirit. A material, stupefying environment has an injurious effect upon the soul, and makes it very difficult for it to develop on the right lines; indeed, it often impedes this development and brings it to an entire standstill. If our environment is such, we must above all avoid giving way to despondency. Let us escape from our surroundings whenever possible, cultivate cheerfulness, busy ourselves around the house and garden, and refuse to give way to dullness and apathy.

How very, very few people there are who strive after their ideals, and how very, very many idlers and wasters, who know nothing of ideals and the spiritual life! Dear St. Joseph, teach us how to live devoutly in unpretentious surroundings, even as thou didst in a little cottage.

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BAPTISM OF JESUS IN THE JORDAN. 1

"*And there went out to him all the country of Judæa . . . and were all baptized by him in the river of Jordan. . . .*" (*Mark* i. 5.)

(*a*) We take direction towards rivers on the shores of which our souls would revive. God flows along the world; we are not allowed to be dried up; therefore we take direction towards Him. We stand in a finite world, both in space and time; the opinion of the changing ages develops and their view of the world also varies on this or the other point. We have very little real and true knowledge; we walk amongst philosophers from whom we do not learn much; but some sort of realism characterises our nature, which assures us that reality is no play; our mind finds no peace in materialism, and loses itself in the pantheism which denies the I, ego. Therefore we escape from the stagnant waters of philosophy to the running waters coming from the mountains; the running water of divine revelation rolls along history. These are fresh, forceful streams; here we come with humility and are cleansed from our sins. Here it is that we progress and develop. Here we do not sit on the edges of ditches to view our sad face therein. Oh, our dear Lord, draw us, help us, guide us, cleanse us! Thou sayest: if we listen to Thee, our lives will be like the swelling stream. Oh that it might be so; let it be so. We hate the marsh-fever, and if we do not turn to Thy streams we shall catch that fever.

(*b*) "*And Jesus, being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and behold a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (*Matt.* iii. 16, 17.)

Humanity develops in the course of history, and this is where God also approaches it. He showed Himself to us in Christ; reality, truth, beauty, and grace revealed themselves to us in Him; "*plenus gratiæ et veritatis*, filled with grace and truth." Man should look at Him and be attached to Him; and should not descend from the heights of history to a mechanical way of life, and should not come down into the chaos of personal impressions and uncertain opinions from out of the glory of the divine face of God. How good for us that beside our speculations and views we possess Christ, from whom we can derive world-conquering evidence. Through Him and in Him our faith cuts its way through the night of heresy and says: we know in whom we have believed; our code of faith is: we believe in Christ! This is our light and sunshine: this is where our soul grows and our disposition becomes sweetened; it will neither be dark nor without force! Christ is to our soul as the Himalayas; the longing for heights carries us towards Him! The longing for heights out of the depths. We have our sins and we seek for grace. Jesus is the Redeemer from our sins; this is Christianity. Through Him and for His sake the Lord forgives us; this is the Gospel which is never out of date.

(*c*) By our faith we stretch beyond the world, and this reality of the celestial world we find in Christ; He descended to us; thus we build our life according to Him, and shape our faith according to Him. We shall not dispute and doubt, but live. . . . We doubt a great deal, for we live but little by the light of truth. Mougel writes of Dionysius the Carthusian: "He wished to know much, so as to be able to love a great deal. He belongs to those saints of the past to whom to know means as much as to love." This same Dionysius writes: "Let us therefore read and learn, not for the purpose of killing time or loading our memory, but for refreshing our spirit and kindling our heart to divine love." . . . We dispute much for we cannot as yet enjoy the truth; he who enjoys, or rather lives deeply, does not dispute much; who has treasures does not lament, but rejoices. Our soul also needs air and sunshine; this our faith gives! We will neither doubt nor dispute, but live!

BAPTISM OF JESUS IN THE JORDAN. II

"Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove, upon him; and a voice came from heaven: Thou art my beloved Son! In thee I am well pleased." (*Luke* iii. 21-22.)

(*a*) With deep humility and holy joy Jesus approached the camp of the great baptizer, the groups on the shores of the river Jordan expecting the Messias; He was shaken by this fiery, humble zeal of public repentance; for all were expecting Him, these fiery longings and this holy ardour were all meant for Him. The consciousness of His mission fills Him with enthusiasm, He steps before John and in humbleness is baptized by him; but the spiritual eyes of the baptizer open and it is he who longs to be immersed in the depths of Jordan before the Lord; he wishes Christ to baptize him. Baptism is the beginning of Christ's public life; the installation ceremony. He begins this life in humility with the penance of John the Baptist. Let us awake in ourselves the feelings of baptism as an absorption into the new world, as a consecration to new life, and the feelings of completely surrendering our whole soul. Oh, how few of us live in the consciousness of having been baptized!

(*b*) "*And praying, heaven was opened*"; otherwise it was closed. Who goes up to heaven? is what the ancients questioned in dismay; we know already who it is who opens the heavens to us. Others open worldly ways, Jesus opens the celestial one. Unrivalled are this road-maker and the road. "Show, O Lord, thy ways to me and teach me thy paths." (*Psalm* xxiv. 4.) How many stand outside and argue and criticise and fade away! Oh, these do not seem to hear the beating of the dove's wings and its inspiration. Those who feel it, arise; they step through the open door, look into the face of Christ and revive. Upon the steps of heaven a wrinkled, sharp-eyed hag is sitting: criticism. It is squabbling and futile. The loving souls, heroes, artists, and saints see it sitting there, but do not stay to talk to it; they follow their hearts! This is what we too should do!

(*c*) The gate of the open heaven is the heart; the *pure heart* which is anointed and hall-marked with truly divine feelings. Purification is a long process, an evolution out of selfishness and violence. Then the gate of heaven is the *loving heart*, which feels by the force of its love that it is the child of God; this is the soul which "giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." (*Romans* viii. 16.) Finally it is *the heart living in holy unity of friendly fellow-feeling*, which does not arise from the force of the law but out of longing to be in conformity with

Jesus, and is incapable of acting otherwise, just because it has Jesus for a friend.

(*d*) "*And the Holy Ghost descended . . . as a dove upon him.*" The flight of the dove implies swift hope; as soon as the heaven opens the dove appears. This dove found a resting-place in Jesus; it brought Him a blossoming olive twig; it flew around Him and kissed Him. O sublime God-man, "*filius columbæ*," the son of the dove; Thy hopes are swift and Thou livest from divine inspirations; both these we have to tend and enjoy: hope and inspiration.

(*e*) "*Thou art my beloved Son.*" Thou seemingly sinful, repenting man, Thou true man, Son-of-God, Thou model and teacher of true holiness; according to Thee everyone should be shaped. Each separate man should feel his own insufficiency and seize in Thy grace the force of life which pleases God. Through Christ and through the grace achieved by Him do we become complete men. Out of our own strength and from ourselves we cannot prosper, but through Him we become complete, strong, and happy beings. It is in this son of His that God loves the God-child created after his image: I love my Son, dearly beloved is He to me, and I love those who walk in his footsteps! This shall lift us indeed; from this we should derive consolation and consciousness that we must never let ourselves stray. Does not Christ love us more than the whole world? He poured out his soul upon us; we also are his "*filii columbae.*" At our baptism also the heavens opened, the Holy Ghost descended, and we became the sons of God. Since then, much strength has lain dormant in our souls, the energies of superior feelings, the veiled traits of God; these we have to develop in Christlike life. The baptized soul is like the dewy meadow, it is fresh, rested and full of magic strength, which the sunshine of grace awakens, and practice develops and perfects.

THE FULFILMENT OF JUSTICE

"*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him. But John stayed him . . . And Jesus answering, said unto him : Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice.*" (*Matt.* iii. 13-15.)

(*a*) The programme of every life is to accomplish every truth, that is to live it with what we owe to God, to our fellow-men, and to ourselves. What else is this than an orientation towards God, ourselves, and the world? From this balance, harmony, peace and joy are derived; this is the truth expounded in feeling, will, and life. It is the recognition of the "*veritas*" in ourselves, in our talents and our sins! "*Justitia*" is the transference of this knowledge to our will; "*veritas*" is the recognition of the reign of God and His sublimity; "*justitia*" is the will according to this knowledge. "*Veritas*" is the recognition of the world and life; "*justitia*" is the right way of taking one's position in it. The demands of "*veritas*" must evoke from us acts of "*justitia*"; truly felt reality and existence shaped in harmony is what we want. The great reality rests around us; let us touch it with the touch of the soul, and "*pax*" and "*gaudium*," peace and joy, will come of it. We have to be the sculptors of our world; by our virtues we must create light and sunshine, harmony and beauty. Do not let us await this from anyone else, for the soul is not passivity but active, shaping force.

(*b*) Towards God our position becomes complete, absolute homage; we owe Him faith with our brain, sacrifice with our hearts; our tears, our strength, and our struggles are also His due. We do not claim anything, but we wish to possess Him. We serve Him wholeheartedly and do not imagine that we have special grace and a special vocation; the love of Christ suffices us. We do not expect manifestations. We have sufficient riches when He looks into our eyes. We do not await for apparitions, why should we? Has not Christ appeared to our soul, "*illuxit in cordibus nostris*." He places us amongst souls, which shine like grains of quartz upon the sands; they peep out into the world as flowers from out of the edge of the forest into the wilderness. We wish to look upon infinity with clear open eyes; we know that we carry a body for a while, and then escape into another world.

(*c*) We have to be "*justus*" towards the world; we have to see in it the strength as well as the good, for it is divine; but we also have to see the evil and the danger, for the system is meant for development and the clashing of forces. The world's strength is for the perfecting of man's immortal soul. We therefore have to make use of this divine world for the shaping of our forces and our talents; but at the same time the earth should be our fertile soil and not our grave! Strength comes to us from the world as to a tree from the earth; it belongs and is meant to be under our feet, but our feet are rather roots; they suck strength! We should not be afraid, not disgusted, but we should make use of the earth and pick out from the chaff of earthly existence the golden grain; otherwise the sons of the world would be cleverer than we. And that would be a pity!

(*d*) We will be "*justus*" towards ourselves, if we do not expect too much or too little from ourselves. We have to be moderate in everything, even in dissatisfaction with ourselves. Those who wish something quickly and have no patience, those who do not regard the flow and development of nature, and who because of certain faults, which are the outcome of their natures, suffer a hindrance in their perfecting and therefore heap complaints upon the world, those do not comprehend the "*justitia*." To these also belong those who kill nature with the supernatural and the supernatural with nature: the strict, dark, fanatical zealots whom it hurts to have a body, although God wished it to be so: or at the other extreme the weak, incapable, squeamish, soft creatures! Oh, let us understand ourselves! We feel a great deal, but we cannot help it. Just as much as our exterior does not depend on us, so in a certain sense, our inner being is also given us. There are powers in us which do not easily obey us, and neither does God say: Go and command! but He rather tells us: Steer carefully and make for what is right!

If we have divined this threefold "*justitia*" we have comprehended the design of God and with it the "*pax et gaudium*." How good it is there; how good and warm; the soul blossoms: "*justus ut palma florebit*." There there is strength, "*sicut cedrus Libani multiplicabitur*," the righteous grow like the palm and become strong like the cedar. We get rid of innumerable disappointments, much trouble and despair!

FASTING AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

"*Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert. . . . And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" (*Matt.* iv. 1-4.)

(*a*) Eat; occupy the world; live. Let there be bread, let this be our chief concern, every stone and each grain of dust should serve this endeavour. Make bread and live strongly in the knowledge of thy power! . . . Jesus protests against the tempter: bread is needed, but man not only lives from bread, from breaking of the soil and stones, from occupying oceans and worlds; more necessary than all is the godly inspiration, the beautiful, pure, noble life, joy and peace of mind! The world of culture is a great temptation to man; the beautiful earth makes him forget the inner-world, and productive work makes him forget heaven, and when creating anything he forgets the building up of his soul-world. And besides this he goes on in a wrong direction and sees in soul-and-body-breaking work his aim of life. O Lord, we inhale Thy breath, with this we realize ourselves and recognize the most important work; this will be the bread and joy of our soul. We work, but the work is not our goal; it is our tool. How far from this is that culture which drove man under the yoke of "*improbus labor*"! At best this can only be transition. This is how we have to feel towards the great world and arrange our own one.

(*b*) Jesus leads us between material and spiritual necessities. We have to develop our talents and we have to work, but we must not expect happiness from work and culture. Such mentality cleaves to the earth; the child of God becomes a worldling, the inner world dries up because of the exterior. But Jesus wishes to help to success just this kingly God-child, this Sublimity born to immortality. He awakens it to consciousness and superiority, saying: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" Therefore with the consciousness of our great task we have to require of ourselves to value our soul highly and take good care of it.

(*c*) Elsewhere also Christ has but little trust in the earth, culture, and riches, for He says: "a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* xix. 23.) Not as if these would be bad in themselves, but because they often induce us to become materialists and full of worldliness; they imprison the soul, capture and strangle it. The world, riches, and power are good, but only if they serve great aims. O Lord, do not let our souls dry up and shrivel, neither from riches nor from poverty! We will not let ourselves dry up from any kind of earthly cares.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION

"*Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" (*Matt.* iv. 5, 6.)

(*a*) The second temptation is the world. "Let it look upon us as prophets, as saints! Let it honour you and pay homage to you! Step upon its neck; it needs a master." . . . Yes, we also wish to be masters. Our reign is a true, not only seeming, power, which consists of the beautiful shaping of our soul; this is where we are masters and do not crave for honour. The world should not distract our attention from the great mission of our soul, neither should semblances or appearances; those also deceive. The kingdom of God is the inner reality; this is the real sovereignty and sublimity. We should stand above the world! Not stoically, for that is also a lie; but in the spirit of St. Francis, who loves all and is pleased with all.

(*b*) Let us bravely go forward with head held high and eyes open. No temptation should distract us, neither sweet nor bitter. In whatever shape it may come to us we should follow our sovereign soul. It is Jesus who places us upon this way and here sometimes He even appears hard. As a boy of twelve He questions His complaining mother: What do you seek? Have you not known that I walk in the will of My Father? When He was preaching in Capharnaum in the first spring of His activity "his friends went out to lay hold on him" and later "there came his brethren and his mother, and standing without, sent unto him, calling him." (*Mark* iii. 21, 31.) But He is firm against their demands, He does not yield to the body and its wishes, and goes onward upon the way of His great mission. This is how we have to gain victory and to lift the soul beyond the various influences. The more great-minded and generous we are, the clearer and stronger we will be. The perfect man should not be a scarecrow but a true, noble, brave, whole man, who loves children, parents, and wife, but never at the expense of divine love.

(*c*) On account of this He also exacts sacrifices from us, which we can only value rightly in this light; He sometimes requires us to go against such feelings which He otherwise orders. "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, . . . and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (*Luke* xiv. 26.) You might have a vocation for complete devotion. If these are up in arms against your mission, be strong ; do not offend the Lord God from misunderstood love. Break off everywhere all that is against God. The kingdom of God deserves this from its children. Therefore we have to be more attached to God than to parents, brothers, wives, and husbands, for we do not verily love them if, by this love, we cheat and degrade ourselves.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

"*Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and said to him : All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him : Begone, Satan ! For it is written : The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.*" (*Matt.* iv. 8, 10.)

(*a*) All this I give thee if thou wilt kneel to idols. The idol is not God, therefore neither truth nor life. Or if idols mean life, then only so far as illusions live in our head, the end of which is bitter deception. Do not let us go towards the idols. We seek for the world, a greater, better world by honouring such idols as power and enjoyment, beauty and our own passions, and when we wish to possess all we degrade ourselves. What use is the world to us if we do not possess a heart which is capable of living and rejoicing? What use is a garden to us if we have no eyes to see. This lovely, glorious world will be pain and suffering to us without a beautiful and glorious soul. Its pleasures will not satisfy us but embitter us with illusions and disappointments. We will endeavour to guard well our freedom that it should not conquer us with its mirage. "*In libertate labor*," this liberty demands work and strife.

(*b*) Just the opposite is the truth; it is then that we possess all, if we do not bow to these idols—that is if we are noble of soul. Jesus also shows us on the occasion of another temptation how determined we have to be, not to leave the ways of the Lord for the mirage of glory and ambition. On one of his journeys to Jerusalem He told his disciples that He would suffer and die and then "Peter taking him, began to rebuke him" (*Mark* viii. 32) "saying, Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee. Who turning, said to Peter: get behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me." (*Matt.* xvi. 22.) How determined the Lord is in putting off the "human ideas." We are not allowed to spare ourselves; who spares himself here will be his own destruction. Therefore in every temptation we have immediately to say: get thee behind me, Satan, we walk the ways of the Lord; we strongly and decidedly will it. Against all mirages of the world and of philosophy immediately lift the flag of the reign of God and assert the consciousness of the children of God!

THE CALLING OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES

"*And (John the Baptist) beholding Jesus walking, he saith: Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak: and they followed Jesus.*" (*John* i. 36.)

(*a*) Vocation in us is the sense for the Sublime, for the soul and what concerns it. God appears to us and draws us to Him. Let us accompany Jesus in our thoughts and address questions to Him, forgetting our personal self; for instance: "Master, where dost Thou live?" and let us go and see and stay with Him "that day." Let us speak of Him to others, let us tell them that He has become the subject of our interest, that we have found the Messias—Jesus, the Son of Joseph of Nazareth. If others would object: can anything good come out of Nazareth? then we defend Him and show our enthusiasm. Behold this is life-devotion, this is the dawn of Apostleship; we have to unite it with purity of heart, with prayer and with a goodwill for work. Jesus casts His glance upon us and into us!

(*b*) "*Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel.*" (*John* i. 49.) The supernatural values become detached from the crust and shell of human views and worldly feelings; Christ is supernatural force, His influences are supernatural effects. These effects possess also bearers: individuals, the Church, the Sacraments; this tendency is like a flowing stream; it carries kingly barges, but it also carries away rubbish with it. Therefore to comprehend grace as the vocation of strength in the world and to offer one's services for its cause—to trust in its strength and make use of it in holy reaction in opposition to the worldly spirit—this indeed is Christ-like, apostolic vocation. "Grace, that is Christ-like strength of soul," should be our thought; we will not repel this thought, but merit it in humility and highly value it . . . this is the sense for Apostolic vocation. We will take care not to stand in its way; we will be humble, love the poor, and value the soul that is in everyone.

(*c*) From God's part vocation is a calling, drawing, animating force—love. "No one can come to Me, if My Father does not draw him," says Jesus. Nobility of soul and supernatural sense prove the connection of God with the soul; such a soul has sense and fire, therefore it possesses the Holy Spirit. It is God who gives such grace. He it is who picks out souls for the tasks of Jesus, for the services of the Holy Ghost, and for distributing His Sacraments. This is no mission to world-fame, but to ardour and zeal in the interests of Christ. Let us highly value every such call, let us answer immediately: behold my Lord, we are ready for Thy command. Speak, and we hear.

THE FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS AT CANA

"*And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee . . . and the wine failing the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine.*" (*John* ii. 1.)

(*a*) Accustomed to the modest circumstances of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus soon noticed their embarrassment and her good heart instigated her to intercede. She approaches her Holy Son with deep, reverential homage, approaches Him who equally feels the embarrassment of the wedding guests and understands her wish to state her demand. Whatever the answer may be, it cannot hurt her; she knows the heart of her Son and she knows that she will be heard. The loving hearts who cling to God know that they will be heard, if not this way, then another. Jesus also says: "I knew that Thou hearest me always" (*John* xi. 42), for whatever I ask for, I always beg for the accomplishment of Thy holy will. This is what the Holy Virgin was like. This is how we also intend to pray; the chief motive of all our demands should be . . . Thy Holy Will.

(*b*) "*Vinum non habent*"—"They have no wine." The feast of our life is often very sad. There is much food, heavy food, which science and politics provide, but our wine is missing, which should refresh the soul and fill it with pure, noble joy of life. Oh, our Mother, intercede on our behalf with Thy divine Son! Show Him our need; tell Him with trust: "They have no wine." He will provide for us.

(*c*) "*This beginning of miracles did Jesus.*" (*John* ii. 11.) It is indeed a modest beginning; a friendly gift in intimate surroundings. Others brought various wedding gifts. Jesus also brought a gift; "his chalice." He gave them; "*calix inebrians*," "*præclarus*." Sweet wine, fiery wine, the Lord Jesus gives to our bridal soul; He warms and heats our heart. Oh, sweet is the wine of the first, fiery love, of the first elating zeal; it makes us forget the world. This is the precious chalice we thirst for!

(*d*) "*Every man at first setteth forth good wine . . . then that which is worse.*" (*John* ii. 10.) Here it is different. At the start of the spiritual soul-life, God gives much consolation, which pleases the faint-hearted, wavering souls ; the Lord bears their weakness in mind, He fondles and encourages them ; later He holds them more firmly and wishes them to serve Him even without a consolation which is felt. Oh, this is more, this is better ; this already is strong life. We will not make our service depend in any way on the consolations we are able to feel. Duty and the love of God prescribe to us what we have to do, and this we will do unconditionally, for it is not our consolation we seek but the will of God.

NICODEMUS COMES TO JESUS BY NIGHT

"*And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night, and said to him : Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God. . . . Jesus answered : Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" (*John* iii. 1.)

(*a*) The inner man has to be reborn, he has to take upon himself the Christ-type . . . essentially, otherwise he misses his aim. The new man becomes so by grace. In the beginning this shape is imperfect, it is more a germ, a beginning. The traits of God such as faith, hope and charity are as yet undeveloped. Our supernatural psychology is like the child's vague notions and impressions ; they are slow to penetrate our consciousness, and becoming like Christ is a long, slow proceeding. This is what St. Paul speaks of when he says: "My little children, of whom I am in labour again until Christ be formed in you." (*Gal.* iv. 19.) In this state there is much unconsciousness and imperfection. Small is the circle of our supernatural vision. We suffer much, we are full of indignation and restlessness. God and religion frighten rather than draw us. Our inclinations are directed towards sensual things. Weak and unreliable is our virtue. Behold the infirmities of childhood. Let us be obedient and allow ourselves to be guided.

(*b*) So as not to become dwarfs we have to develop. We have to conceive the truths of faith consciously and these must supply us with motives for our feelings and activity. We have to understand ourselves, our physiology, psychology, inclinations and desires of the body as well as those of the soul; we are not to take for sin the natural desires, especially those concerning sensual life; but we have to know the moods and colours of our feelings, we have to enlarge the rays of our conscious world and to force them under the protectorate of the will. In this orderly, sensible, rational inner world we can approach God, approach eternity, Christ, the animating Holy Ghost, and we will not seek virtue in who knows what kind of holy "*excessus*" but we will live it in every condition of life, day for day. The Lord did not live in the desert of the hermits nor in the cave of the penitents, but He lived in the house of Nazareth!

(*c*) *Spiritus et vita* . . . peace and independence of the soul achieved in the long strife for liberty! We have to go through much struggle, till we acquire solidity of the soul, and allow our faith to reign in our view of the world, and the grace of Christ in our feelings. We go through much sentimentality, but we will not allow ourselves to melt with it; we will overcome the onesidedness of the soul's pubescence and confident, presumptuous desires; we will give up the illusion that identifies holiness with raptures, scourgings, and visions. In the life of the saints we should regard, not so much the miraculous, but the deep inner life. We are convinced that Christian perfection consists of a life which acquiesces in the holy will of God, is disciplined, unpretentious, and simple, and is inspired by eternal hope. We wish to have little *materia* and much soul, little of the world and much of Christ! Let us give ourselves over to this spirit. Let us start. "*Post Alpes Italia*, over the Alps to beautiful Italy," said Hannibal to his troops. And he succeeded in crossing the Alps along with his elephants. Cortez burnt his boats when he arrived at the land of his hopes. We also will break with our low, rough, stubborn, petty self.

THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT, IS SPIRIT

"*That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.*" (*John* iii. 6.)

(*a*) Beautiful morals are the most beautiful masterpieces. There are different lovely products in stone and colour; but this beauty all flows from the soul. That in itself is more beautiful than all these. A beautiful soul, pure morals and harmonious life; this is the real masterpiece. Therefore the Lord God leaves the statues and pictures below, but takes the beautiful souls over to the museum of Heaven. For the marble masterpiece can be burnt to lime and the picture turn to rags, but the soul which is formed after the likeness of God will be an everlasting remembrance; this masterpiece the Lord God also finds pleasure in. Whereas the immoral man is ruin and decay; he is not a shape but shapelessness; not rhythm and not proportion. There the body is in excess over the soul;

the idea is killed by passion, and one passion kills the other; the immoral man is a chaotic world where forces struggle and cannot develop . . . let us endeavour to be Christlike, to be the sons of God, to be more valuable men . . . this is what our inspirations urge us to; let us pray for this, that we be able to accomplish it.

(*b*) And where do beautiful souls grow? Everything has its native soil. In the olden world the shrubs grew to mighty forests; since then they have shrivelled, for the earth cooled. The lion in the menagerie is a shabby king and is not in his own country but in a cage. What he needs is the endless desert. And where is the native soil of holy love? Nowhere so profoundly as in the Gospel, and if we view the life of zeal, it is nowhere to be found so intensely as in the atmosphere of the Holy Eucharist. The pure, harmonious, beautiful souls, the air, water, and sunshine they need, and the rich energy, we find in the Holy Eucharist. There it is we find broad, open views and liberty which give happiness. God is with thee, thou art free. Christ is with thee, in thee. Thou art greater than Cæsar, greater than Napoleon, not looking at power and not at genius, but taking the sovereignty of life. Thou art the temple of God. God values more highly the prayer whispering in thee than the church of St. Peter and the catacombs. And where do we feel more that such values are in us than in Holy Communion? There man awakes to the knowledge of his own dignity, his richness, and the fact of his being indeed the son of God. Oh, how good this is for him!

(*c*) Holy love further needs sources which give pure water; wells void of fever and typhoid bacillus. With this I allude to holy purity, for holy purity is the freshest and most beautiful morality. Man becomes blinded by passions, especially by those sins which violate the sixth commandment; his blood thickens and his brain dries up. What is able to freshen this dry waste? The grace of the Holy Eucharist; it is that which educates noble generations. Those souls which the Pontificale Romanum calls "*sublimiores animæ*," sublime souls, those are all favourers of holy purity. The Holy Eucharist creates the immaculate intactness and transparency of the soul. Where this is missing, there the strength, beauty, and harmony of morality is also absent.

(*d*) Finally, a beautiful soul needs warm impulse. Warmth is full of energy and impulse is full of force. Without these there is no freedom, no start, no enthusiasm, and no courage. The Eucharist gives us the spirit of sacrifice. The comfort of our struggling, suffering soul is the Heart of Jesus. Endurance is the lower grade of sacrifice; the higher grade is voluntary sacrifice—to tread upon the body, sensuality, and the world, inasmuch as these can be stepping-stones for the soul, whereby it may rise. This self-sacrifice was the magnificent dower of the Church. "*O beatam Ecclesiam*," exclaims St. Cyprian, "*fuit quondam in operibus fratrum candida, nunc facta est in sanguine martyrum purpurea!*" The robe of the Ecclesia was shining silver and gold brocade, *fuit quondam candida*, in the glory of Pentecost fires; then the Lord Jesus wove into this gold and silver brocade the fiery roses, the blood-red threads, and *facta est purpurea!* Every soul which loves the Lord Jesus wears the sacrificial characteristics on its brow, which come to the surface in Holy Communion; it renders it willing for self-sacrifice. This is where, according to the words of the poet, the "*magnæ animæ prodigæ*" grow, who lavish their soul and life, but in such manner that they are repaid a hundredfold.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT

"*Wonder not that I said to thee, You must be born again. The spirit breatheth where he will, and thou hearest his voice; but thou knowest not whence he cometh and whither he goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" (*John* iii. 7.)

(*a*) The Spirit comes when it wishes. A word here and there in a book, a feeling in prayer, a thought, an idea in meditation warms, encourages, and reassures us. The ideas of God sparkle in us as the grains of sand in the sunshine. When they come to us like this, let us accept them aright and act accordingly.

(*b*) The spirit comes as it wishes, sometimes solemnly and sometimes joyously; it humbles or elevates; at times it animates, at others it shames us, it sometimes frightens us, but also stimulates; we sometimes crouch at its feet and at others embrace its heart. Sometimes it is far from us, so that we should long for it, and again it is near, so that we should not despair. At times it covers our soul in the shape of mist or cloud . . . and at others as a glorious intuition; and in this also it acts according to its will. Sometimes it incites to joy and consolation or to patience and sacrifice; sometimes it humiliates and at other times arouses us with the incentive for great deeds. We have to make use of it all! No one should say, What does one live for? and be bored. No one should say it, for can one not give a glass of water to the thirsty, or a good word, advice, feeling, and service to a fellow-man? Live and do not grumble; for you can just as well live and make your life a heaven upon earth.

(*c*) Nothing can replace its gifts, the names of which are: life, joy of living, self-esteem, trust, joy, animation, peace, bravery, happiness. . . . Divine gifts are these: Jesus also gave such: light to the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead; this is the divine way. Oh, come, Holy Ghost, and give us much of Thy life, give more and more.

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

"*For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son. . . .*" (*John* iii. 16.)

(*a*) God loved us in His Son. Until He loved us this way, we did not fully understand Him. Infinite is He and has no human feelings, the variations of emotion do not live in Him; He neither breathes nor faints, He has no blood; pure, eternal Spirit is He. In nature He showed us that He loves us. He created the glorious sun, but also the Arctic Ocean and the snow-fields, flowers full of scent, but also volcanoes; splashing waves, but also storms. He spoke graciously, but also crashed in his lightnings. O Lord, we do not wholly comprehend Thee! Concerning morals moreover; the beauty of virtue filled our heart, but the flood of wickedness also rushed over us; the warmth of holy love and the flush of shame alternated upon our countenance, and the knowledge of Thy love became darkened. Does He love us, we question, with that absolute goodwill which our nature demands, with almightiness? And is our human feeling satisfied with this? Oh, this is a deluding idea. For we know that God loves us with the heart of Jesus: "God so loved the world," He loved it so. This we comprehend and are reassured.

(*b*) This is the way He loves, with such a divine heart. Amongst men there also are blessed hearts; they open the fairy world of betrothed, parental, filial love, and the love of friendship; they strew life with sweet, perfumed feelings. Further, the heart inspires the world of art. Then comes faith with a new world of feelings. Into what world does the heart of Jesus lead us, the heart with which God wished to love us, in order to lead us into a divine world of love? Thus did "God love the world."

(*c*) This love excelled in every respect. It was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin without sin, therefore it became "*speciosus*," beautiful. Charm was seen in its face, love spoke from out of its words; as a symbol it chose the lamb, the "Lamb of God." In His child-soul His lovableness dimmed the glory of all arts, and from His eyes only the innocence and charm of the infant shone. His manhood was spent in the magic of the soul's power: "Follow me," He said, and they followed Him, sinners and crowds alike. Without Him the home was bare and with Him in the desert they forgot their home. Apostolic souls are His shadows; St. Dominic in his white, woollen garb and the special personality of St. Francis of Sales both remind us of Him. He loves mankind and it is drawn to Him; He went early to pray, and before the rays of the sun fell on the Mount of the Olives He was praying beneath its trees. He speaks and talks, teaches, and exchanges ideas and feelings; He is not cold, not mechanical. He has not a permanent home; Nicodemus comes to Him at night and when no one comes, He prays—sometimes the whole night through. His garments and His hair are damp from the dew of night, but He feels it not, so deep-hearted is He. Once or twice the Holy Scripture talks of His eyes; He looked upon the rich youth with ravishing love, upon Peter with deep sorrow! What an effect He had upon Matthew, Zachaeus, and Magdalen! "Thus did God love the world."

(*d*) With such love has He loved "all along," and so He equally demands love. Let us also love Him with warm, human, ardent love. Cecilia and Agnes love Him as their betrothed; the heart of St. Philip Neri was so enlarged by love that two of his ribs were displaced thereby; St. Catherine loves, and the Lord Jesus places a ring upon her finger. He wishes us to love Him feelingly. "Look at this heart," He says, "which so dearly loved!" O dear Lord, we love Thee in return with all our might. We so dearly love Jesus that we offer ourselves to Him and do so joyously!

JESUS AT JACOB'S WELL

"*He cometh therefore to a city of Samaria, which is called Sichar . . . now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well. . . . There cometh a woman of Samaria, to draw water. Jesus saith to her: Give me to drink.*" (*John* iv. 5.)

(*a*) Give me to drink. I am an exhausted pilgrim, I seek after souls; in reality they are my drink and the will of God is my food; but thee I also ask, give me to drink. "*Sitio.*" Jesus seeks souls and thirsts for their salvation; He approaches them, asks for their love . . . therefore He it is who starts to speak; in the guise of a Prophet but with the humble directness of Apostolic love, He approaches the soul of the woman. "Give me to drink" means as much as "Give me thy soul." This is how we also have to go after souls, to speak to them; we must not be shy; and as St. Ignatius of Loyola says: I wish to go to them through their gate, that I might lead them out by mine.

(*b*) "*Then the Samaritan woman saith to him: How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman? for the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans.*" The prepossessed soul stands rigidly and coldly in the way of the Master, rejecting Him; it does not feel in His voice the accent of love, and reads not from out of His eyes the wish of the Apostle: it lives in other ideas. This is how we also behave with God; we are not fine, sensitive souls; so do others behave with us, who have other views of the world, a different education and life. This should not make us recoil. Zeal is patient and persevering. Without patience it would be fanaticism, as patience without zeal is indifference; the former is lava, the latter ice; neither of them is fertile soil.

(*c*) "*Jesus answered and said to her: If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that saith to thee: Give me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him.*" If we would know these two worlds, the one which comes towards us and the one which is hidden in us; if we would know what kind of soul speaks to us now, oh, how our frame of mind would change! Thou art night, I am sunshine—thou art eager for pleasure, I am joyous—thou art degraded and I am full of glory—thou art shedding thy blossoms and I am intact! If thou wouldst know how strong I am and how weak thou art and what grace is capable of and what it creates! But this is the gift of God. He it is who creates soul, life, beauty, strength, joy, happiness; these are the gifts of God. These we have to wait and beg for. Let us go to meet them, beg for them; He will give effective, creating, delivering strength.

(*d*) "*He would have given thee living water.*" Living water, water of life. It refreshens, renders strong and healthy, gives good blood; it is pure water, not weedy and foul, there are no bacilli in it. Those journeying in the desert have greatest need of water to refresh them. We become tired; we are in need of living waters. Other wells dry up, they dwindle into weak, thinly dripping streamlets; this living water, on the other hand, is a torrential stream. Youthful enthusiasm and idealism, little by little, also fail; whilst the grace of God is inexhaustible—"*fluminis impetus.*" Other water loses its strength, it becomes stale and decomposed; whilst the waters of the soul are continually stirred up by the angels of prayer and those who are immersed in them will be healed—"a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

(*e*) "*The woman saith to him: Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw. Jesus saith to her: Go call thy husband.*" The waters of life I cannot give thee; thou art unchaste, faithless, fickle; thou art a perjurer, a forsworn one, an adulteress. So also is the sinful soul; the Holy Scripture speaks with great reverence of the souls who love God, but it attacks the unfaithful ones with burning words. They do not receive living water. How shall the Lord let the crystal-clear streamlet into the swamp? are we temples, that God might reside in us? In small things there can also be much faithlessness; are we perhaps undisciplined in our prayers, and are our thoughts also moody? Are we perhaps reckless in our way of seeing, feeling, and in being touchy and over-sensitive?

Oh, how delicate is the Lord Jesus, He only just touches the wound. This is how it should be done! This educates the reprobate to a sense of honour. The doctor shall keep to his intransigent standpoint where decay is concerned. The Apostle shall breathe morality and rebirth. This is how the wounds of the soul shall be handled in confession; for the humiliated sufferer feels the slightest touch!

(*f*) "*The woman saith to him: Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers adored on this mountain; and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore. Jesus saith to her: Woman, believe me that the hour cometh, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father. . . . God is a Spirit; and they that adore him must adore him in spirit and in truth.*" Woman, do not look to the mountains and burning altars, but endeavour to approach God with soul and prayer, that is with pure heart and devotion. This is the first and chief thing, then follows the ritual of the outward service of God. More necessary than altar and sacrifice is the feeling of penitence, ardour, and real emotion; only hereafter shall we care about altar and penitence. God is Spirit, therefore shall we be firstly spiritual; spirituality and what comes from the soul inspires our outward religiousness. This is the meaning of the words. But divine service has also to have fine ways in which to be expressed, ways which capture the frame of mind. Why should divine service be puritan when God has created disposition, beauty, and feeling? Surely those pray " in spirit and in truth " who adore God with their whole nature. Therefore God shall be praised in church also by art, music, song, flowers, and incense; these shall aid our human nature to ardent devotion and adoration.

(*g*) " *The woman saith to him: I know that the Messias cometh. . . . Jesus saith to her: I am he, who am speaking with thee.*" He presents Himself and lifts her up to Him. Elsewhere He hints at His identity, in parables here He openly discloses it. The woman is already all fire and glow; she only has one thought—Him. Forgotten are her jug, the well, and the water; she has already caught fire, she hurries, runs and announces what has happened to her! Well does the Lord shape, He educates to receptiveness and devotion and at the same time lets us remain in the state of our humility and modesty. Oh, come, hurry, that you also should know the Messias. He told me my sins and opened my eyes; I see already, you all shall also do likewise, says the woman. Supernatural life begins with the recognition of our sins and with penitence.

JESUS AND THE RULER

" *And there was a certain noble, whose son was sick at Capharnaum . . . went to him and prayed him to come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.*" (*John* iv. 46.)

(*a*) It was the faith of the nobleman which led him to Jesus; it showed him to whom to go and what to think when nature failed; what to hope for when human strength was no more at his service. Behold faith, the shining light of our overclouded soul ; it is a good strong knowledge. Let us educate it. Jesus also alludes to faith, He sends us towards it ; to faith which shall seek life eternal, which shall be reassured, even at the grave of our beloved ones. The " noble " man does not as yet comprehend this ; he has not yet experienced faith, not really felt it ; for he only views it as an implement against earthly evils. For faith is an answer to all the questions of existence, time, and eternity. We have a longing for eternal life, and our faith tells us that we already live eternal life, of which death is merely the transition to happiness or unhappiness. We live in this knowledge and feel accordingly. There can be a great difference between faith and feeling. For instance, we believe that God is present, that He has counted every hair of our head, and that our soul is an infinite treasure ; but we may be very far from feeling these intensely. Our faith is like the perennial root at the time of frost, there is strength in it but it is undeveloped. God implanted the divine roots of faith into us in baptism. Our duty is (1) to realize that faith is not the sum total of the questions of the Catechism, which we have merely to learn by heart. We have to experience its truth. We have to experience God and His secret influence on the soul. (2) We have to practise faith ; Carlyle also says : " He who doubts should act ; action banishes doubt." (3) We should support our endeavours by prayer : "*unctio ejus docet.*" By our prayers our faith becomes adorned and attractive.

(*b*) The nobleman is led by his love. He wishes to heal the one he loves and who suffers. He takes part himself in the saving work ; he hurries hither and thither, begs, endures, and humiliates himself. This care accompanies him and shows him the way. He is confident that Jesus will understand and help him. Do we also love? Do we love our soul? Do we care about it when it is ailing? And how do we act when others are ill, when their body or soul is ailing? Do we help them? Have we mercy? Do we notice if the servants of our house do not care about their soul and do not go to confession? Merciful love is able to convert; it not only endeavours to give bodily healing but also spiritual healing to the poor invalid, for it sees beyond the ailing of the body that of the soul. Let us beg for and hasten the healing of both ailments, let us carry it into effect even by means of sacrifice.

(*c*) "For he is at the point of death," his vital force diminished; the limbs are growing cold, the beating of the heart is weakening, head and breast ache, the eyesight fades. The vital force of the soul is faith, devotion, love, ardour, enthusiasm, and joy; this is the real throb of the heart and blood, from which there come strength and substance into the soul. Oh, how good this is! There is also a cooling of the soul; this is when we are neglectful and become slack, when our prayers and Communions are cold; when we feel far away from the Lord. We have to despise this state of dying, and must not suffer it. We must examine the cause of our coldness and awaken faithful love. When the soul is whole, healthy and strong and goes with enthusiasm towards its ideals, then such states of mind do not present themselves; but in case of slackness they grow to weeds. This is how we feel even when we have committed no particular sin; our whole spiritual life is weak and joyless. We should shake ourselves out of such lethargy and take to heart the exhortation: "*esto fidelis.*" We are unfaithful, therefore we make no progress. We should have faithfulness even in the simplest things, such as disciplining our eyes, tongue, and thoughts, and in being willing and joyous.

(*d*) The way of decay is marked by many venial sins, by many unconsidered stumbles, faults, and insults, with which we offend God and which we look upon as trivialities. This does not coincide with love at all. He who lies, calumniates, hates, offends, he who is touchy, impatient, and nervous, who takes his duty too lightly and does not honour man, is like an unwashed, unkempt, ugly visage and not at all like the child of God. Such a heart is not vigilant, and the spirit of God does not dominate it. What we need is vigilant moral beauty!

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

"*Jesus therefore said to him: Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not. The ruler saith to him: Lord, come down before that my son die.*" (*John* iv. 48.)

Man will go to any length when need and misery make their appearance. If he is ailing, he wants to be cured; if danger threatens, he runs to Christ; but the Lord would wish us to acquire in the first place deep, zealous faith for relieving our troubles and suffering. To believe, to cling to God, and live in Him—this is what the soul needs.

(*a*) *My faith* is a strong force; that draws the soul to God. And Jesus says that the spirit of the Father attracts, and powerfully too, not violently, but with trust, love, and feeling. Violence is a weak attraction; love, joy and goodwill are the greatest. And so that our faith should be more attractive, we have our dear Jesus, the Holy

Virgin's beloved Son; that is why we possess a mother in the beauty of virginity and in the sweetness of motherhood. Mount Sinai is different from Bethlehem . . . in the place of flashing clouds an Infant and His mother! The mount of Elijah, where fire consumes the people, is different from Golgotha; there we find glowing fire, here the pallor of the Man of pain and of the suffering Mother! O dear Jesus, who art so sweetly human, Thou who impartest charm, grace, and unction to our faith, we beg Thee to attract and soften us. We make more progress by practising our faith than by arguing. We wish to live according to Thee, for then mental difficulties will not overwhelm us.

(*b*) Our faith should be an ardent, warm emotion. There are many different kinds of faith: cold, distrusting, dry, tasteless faith and incredulity. Some do not think, but believe; others think but do not believe; others again think, believe, but do not live. These are all dead or dead-alive. We must put heart into the lifelessness, then there will be faith. Faith is devotion to the leadership of God; we trust His words and guiding hand; we surrender ourselves completely, as is due to the centre, aim, and hope of all. If thou believest with thy whole heart, then will I baptize thee, said Philip to the Ethiopian. This is what we also need; we have to believe with our whole heart. We complain that our faith is wanting; but have we worked for it with a whole heart, have we searched for it with goodwill, and have we endeavoured to pursue it with a child-like mind? Have we understood the innermost impulse of our heart? Have we listened to its plaintive longings, its longings for the noble, pure, sunny heights?

(*c*) Our faith is a strong persevering disposition. The word of the Apostle denotes the nature of it: "*Credidi et certus sum*," I believe and do not waver. We also have our difficult moments, our mental darkness and our suffering of the heart, but we oppose this darkness and suffering with our will. My Lord, we wish to be reassured in Thee! With Thee we also go to death; at Thy word we cast our net and know that we will catch a treasure in it. With this strong, comforting will we free ourselves from doubts, waverings, and uncertainties. Dear is the faith of the child which has no doubts, but lovelier is the faith of the Apostle who freed his faith from doubt. "I knew whom I believed and I was reassured." Such faith has indeed Easter—Whitsuntide—peace. This faith overcomes the world.

THE CALLING OF SIMON AND ANDREW

"*And passing by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother, casting nets into the sea . . . and Jesus said to them: Come after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.*" (*Mark* i. 16.)

(*a*) We do not know God directly, only indirectly; and unspeakably better than forest, ocean and sky, God leads the way to Himself, firstly by way of history and finally through Christ. But where is Christ Himself? Behold He spreads His hands over Peter, Andrew, and John, and makes them His Apostles. These in their turn lay their hands on Paul and Barnabas, Paul on Timothy, and they hand down the power by the laying-on of hands, by the anointing of the priests from generation to generation. The power of the clergy presents to us the Gospel of Christ, the Sacraments of Christ, and ensures

His grace. We have to see Christ in our priests; "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God." (1 *Corinth.* iv. 1.) This is our faith and joy. Therefore if we say of our priest-acquaintance: I know him, he was my playmate; then let us also believe that he is sent from God when he says: "This is my flesh . . ." "I absolve thee"; and let us honour him thus.

(*b*) "I will make you to become fishers of men," but you also have to take part in this work with heart and soul, with your whole life. I give power; in exchange, you must give your life. I give mission; in this mission you have to walk continually. I lift you to Myself; you must experience this proximity to God; you are not My mechanical tools but Apostles. I entrust you with the Eucharist; your life shall be the commentary of its hidden force; the Gospel I give you, you have to live in its depths. In one word: I make you Mine, but you stake your whole life for Me.

(*c*) This indeed is a great thing! But if it is God's wish, and Jesus accomplishes it, then it is sure to succeed! The Sacrament is the well of strength; the heart of Jesus is the brazier; the blessing is the love of Christ. And if He sent Gideon from the barn, David from the field, and Saul from the mount of Ephraim to become hero, prophet, king, and ordained fishers to be Apostles, then He now also ordains and sends priests from families where deep faith lives—from the side of mothers who are like the mother of Samuel—sends and ordains them in seminaries above which glows the burning torch of purity, prayer, meditation, and zeal, indicating God's most favoured abode and the garden of the Holy Ghost.

JESUS TAUGHT AS ONE HAVING POWER

"*For he was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes.*" (*Mark* i. 22.)

(*a*) Jesus as man is the point of contact of the world with God, full of force and strength. His human soul is the soul of the Son of God, which sees God, and though being finite, does not quite comprehend Him, and still by His seeing God He is infinitely more wise than the geniuses walking the earth and working with induction and syllogism. He sees God and the world, the infinite stream of life and its flood, and from this it is that His soul becomes beautiful, tender, deep, strong, and magical, and this is what flows from Him in the freshness of His personality and unflagging vigour; this radiates from His eyes; this unfading disposition mysteriously touches souls. This freshness and strength of life goes hand-in-hand with the divine, supernatural influences, about which He says: "No one can come to Me, if he is not drawn by My Father." Influence us, dear Lord, that we may revive, that in our inner world we may come in contact with Thee. We place our soul, our heart, and our disposition under Thy influence. Our Jesus, our Master!

(*b*) The strength of Jesus is the mind filled with reality, truth, intuition, and conviction—the heat and crystal purity of feeling—the beauty of disposition pervaded by God. In His ideas God is mirrored; truth became sweet milk upon His lips; all that He did and said referred to life: "*panis vitæ*," "*fons vitæ*," "*lignum vitæ*," and this beautiful, strong life was placed in us by God through Christ, it was shaped upon us by His grace and touch. His heart is the power and His blood the price for which He bought us. Blood unites us with Him, and what blood it is! And all this continually instigates and encourages us to take into ourselves this Christ-like strength. If we carve in stone the lovely shape, let us submit to the Christ-type being formed in us. Let us often rise to the heights of His thoughts, feelings, and longings, and let us dive into the depths of His soul which clings to God, and thus we shall feel that He lifts us, as well as shaping and attracting us. Do not let us look on this as merely words but as vital strength. Let us try to live it.

(*c*) The effect of Jesus was not only the radiation of the soul but grace was also in His words and example. God touched souls, and from His touch they changed. Many speak from the heart and yet without effect; grace, that is the divine touch, is needed for speech to have effect. Souls united with God and filled with God, as Apostles, saints, and prophets, are really able to have effect. We also have to be filled with Him; by Him we become strong!

JESUS HEALS SIMON'S WIFE'S MOTHER

"*And Jesus rising up out of the synagogue, went into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.*" (*Luke* iv. 38.)

(*a*) The soul also is taken with fever, even the course of purification is fever, which does not happen without pain. We shall have anguish which burns like fire, and in its heat our sinful inclinations and wishes will change into energies which please God. The restless, flurried soul is also feverish. The nervously interested, ambitious soul likewise; and also the soft, impressionable, sentimental, loving soul. The correction and purification of the soul should always have a liberating, not an embittering effect, so that it may have inclination as well as energy to dive into the wasp's nest of the heart. As we have to dive into it, let us do so with an iron determination.

(*b*) Jesus approaches the bed of the invalid; takes hold of her hand; influences her by His strength. His sure, calm look sinks into the soul of the sick one, it reassures and draws her to Him. His sublime, beautiful soul satisfies the greatest need of sinful, feverish, ailing hearts, and their longing for beautiful, strong, joyous life. For is it not this that the feverish souls need? And the Healer says: Why do you gasp, why are you flurried, why do you tremble? Be calm; here am I! And the soul which lost its balance in the desire for knowledge and pleasure feels that *health* approaches it in the shape of moral order, and *cheerful beauty* in the shape of divine life's harmony. This attracts it, it comes to love it, makes an effort, and is healed.

(*c*) And rises and serves Jesus. It becomes strong; it is able to rejoice, therefore it is willing. The strength of her body and soul she places at His service, for she loves the sources of her joy and health. And the more willingly she serves, the stronger she will be. How good it is to be strong. "If ye do not believe, ye do not comprehend." In deeds have you to experience it. Here and now we have to rejoice that we are the children of God, that we wish good and do good, and that our soul accordingly is sunshine which cannot be darkened by any night, only if we forget what we are and what divine life can stream forth from us.

ALL SEEK FOR THEE!

" *And rising very early, going out, he went into a desert place: and there he prayed. . . . And when they had found him, they said to him: All seek for thee.*" (*Mark* i. 35.)

(*a*) We all seek Him, for firstly He gives us assurance that our sins will be pardoned, and secondly that we will partake of the glorious, divine, eternal life. Above all, our soul urges the remission of sins; for in the sublimity of the moral system it perceives and adores the bliss-giving or condemning will of God. Let us comprehend the human heart, it does not wish to know, to beg, to trust, but *to exist;* it wishes not to be ruined. It has many sins—and the cry of the heart for purity, stainlessness, that is, remission of sins, this is the most ancient and most thrilling psalm. A pure heart give us, O Lord, otherwise we perish . . . and Jesus comes and encourages: I will give! This is the great fact which is not affected by the world, this is the all-important tidings which is not brought by science, art, and culture. An English philosopher relates that in the poor quarter of Dublin he came upon a dying woman, who lay on straw upon the floor and beside her lay her dead child, as if it had been of wax. Its small hands were linked and its finger-tips pink. All around on the floor there was water; for according to the instructions of the dying mother the father had baptized his child. The woman looking up at the philosopher, asked weakly: "Are you the doctor?" "No, but he will soon be here!" "Pray," she whispered, "that God may not take my soul away in sin."

The philosopher knelt down and prayed with the woman's rosary, until the priest and the doctor arrived. "God reward you!" murmured the invalid, "now I am at rest."

Supposing, continued the philosopher, that I had told her all I know of the Greek sages and writers and what I had found in the mazes of philosophy: What use would this have been to me and still more to her? You will answer that it would have been of no use in this case, for the poor woman was uneducated. But let us suppose that she belonged to the upper-classes, would this have altered matters? Philosophy and education are good things, but they are only *ornamental.* They are good for those who live peacefully in the world and are in good health, but the knowledge that elevates and makes man happy, this knowledge it does not give. What is more, education dealing only with the outer world mostly makes us superficial towards inner values, it expects more good, more life from externals; and the inner moral world becomes flat and weak against demoniacal powers and darkness. Culture has no consciousness of being able to help mankind. It is incapable of lifting man out of the darkness surrounding him, or of rescuing him from the ruin that is threatening him! It is Christ who does this; therefore the hope of man relies on God, life rises upon Him, and through Him science and art possess their true value.

(*b*) It gives us consciousness and reassurance about our partaking in the glorious, divine, eternal life. Life is reality . . . eternal life is the greatest reality, and all that gives us this eternal life has real, bliss-giving strength. Jesus gives strength for shaping eternal life within our souls. Every rising and progressing age adores strength. The ideal of modern culture is also great strength. The present age moved and brought into motion the whole of nature, awoke its forces, and from them it expected happiness and better men. An immense longing for life and an unquenchable thirst for happiness characterized it. But great complications arose: strength somehow got lifted away from life, it became an independent power which rather makes of man a servant than a lord through the tremendous work it requires of him. And in this work man withers away; he has no time to become more noble and to develop the spiritual contents of life. The joy which goes with the production of strength is also spent, for only strength which elevates causes joy, not strength which enslaves. What is the good of awaking strength if slavery comes out of it? Lord Jesus, Thy strength also demands work, but this work always raises us; it demands co-operation, but this always liberates and never enslaves. This force and work cultivates the soul, consciousness, life; it gives more life, stronger life, more beautiful life. Let us walk among ironworks, sledge-hammers, forges, earth-shaking machines, smoking factory chimneys, always with the knowledge: Jesus! Thy work is superior, Thy strength is more sublime, Thy work is more ideal, Thou developest eternal life, Thou educatest ruling souls! Thy forces are forces which rise from the depths to the heights where the soul flourishes. O Master, teach us what we must do to possess eternal life!

(*c*) He does not only give eternal life, for the soul to live in, but He renews our life and places it in the state of innocence and immortality; He assures unfailing reassurance not only for the soul but for the whole of man. And this is indeed what we are in need of; we need to find a creating, restoring arm which shall re-create man on the point of death; we await resurrection, restoration, regeneration! When we die, we do not need a biographer who buries a past life in lifeless paper with dead letters; nor a sculptor who copies our figure, now crumbled to dust, in numb stone or cold iron, and places it in the market-place or by the wayside, so that we may stand there blind and dumb. What we need is *regeneration*; so that He who created us should in the same way recall us to existence, but to more beautiful, immortal, and yet human existence. This is what Our Lord promises us, this is what He will bring to us some time, resurrection, life—He who showed his plans in His own person and sowed them in our soul upon the glowing dawn of His Easter morn. Oh, come life, sweet, risen life, Thee I await, for Thee I glow with ardour!

JESUS TEACHES THE MULTITUDE OUT OF THE SHIP

"*And it came to pass, that when the multitudes pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth, and saw two ships standing by the lake . . . and going into one of the ships that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting, he taught the multitudes out of the ship.*" (*Luke* v. 1.)

(*a*) What an enchanting sight! The streaming crowd and Jesus who separates Himself from them, but only a few steps, "a little from the land." The crowd throngs on the shore; in the low water-reeds, straw and rotting leaves float about; the earthy people of the coast, stand there, looking to the sea . . . from this surrounding Jesus longs for the pure element. . . . He does not say "*odi profanum vulgus*"; not in the least, He loves it; but at the same time He also knows that life is terribly poor, swampy, dirty, and foul; but He and His truth and pulpit are pure and holy. The Lord Jesus lets us see this holy difference between Gospel and life, truth and the world; He does not tear Himself away from the people, but He is superior to them, more sublime; it is from another element, from another world, that He speaks to us. Even while standing on the shore, and even if we are in shallow waters, let us only look towards the ship and hear the words of the Lord! . . .

(*b*) "*He desired him to draw back a little from the land* . . ." How good and kind the Lord is; He was quite close to us, He became quite human. The Lord wishes for something, but He asks for it. He can express Himself in every conceivable way, from the absolute assertion of the Sublime to the soft breath of grace; the voice of the Lord now roars, now whispers, now crushes, now caresses, now tears us away, now draws us on, now commands, now entreats—in one word it is strong and fine; it has soft, sweet, tender tones and suggestions. We too are drawn towards the Lord, He draws, encourages, and calls us; His grace is like to the waves continually touching the shore. Oh, let us obey its slightest touch!

(*c*) This is Peter's ship. What would he not give to and do for his Lord! He starts well, that he might not only serve the Lord with a fragile little ship, but that he might become the unshaken, fundamental rock of the Church.

The little ship is a symbol, so is the rock and the miraculous draught of fish. The first indicates the fate of the Gospel upon the ocean of human will and caprice, the other two indicate the absolute victory of the Divine word. From all three points of view let us attach ourselves to Peter and the Church; his little boat leads us across agitation and bewilderment and his rock offers safety and attachment amidst doubt and strife. The blessing of God is upon the hand of the fisher of men, for he casts his net at the word of Jesus and by His grace. I also am His captive.

"LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP"

"*Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon: Launch out into the deep. . . .*" (*Luke* v. 4.)

(*a*) These depths open in our own souls. We stand at the precincts of the eternal; these entrances are sublime; this is where science makes its appearance and speaks of what is true and real; this is where art spreads before us the play of harmony; here it is that life ebbs and flows, life full of deep instinct and yet unspeakably shallow. This is whence we view the star-world and realize that it sails through the universe like a glorious fleet; our flagship is the sun. Mars, Venus, and our earth reel around it like tiny galleys, and this whole fleet of stars upon the deep ocean of the sky dashes forward and goes—whither? Wherever it may go, it will not emerge from the precincts of eternity, it remains "*dans le vestibule de l'infini.*" Behold the worlds of heaven and the heavens of the world. He who stands in these precincts, and looks into eternity, on him the mysterious presentiment of infinite existence descends! here must be eternity, he murmurs; the feeling of humility and dependence takes possession of him; he feels as Job felt "*in terra Hus*" three thousand years ago. Our souls have not changed since then; we are all the brothers of Job and the Prophets. Man kneels on the shore of the infinite and says with Descartes: "I feel that I am a finite being, which continually longs for the better, the greater, the more perfect." Oh, let it long freely; let it long and not be afraid! It shall look up to the sky, or into the calix of the flowers and say: I acknowledge Thee, my Lord, for Thou art so near to me that I feel Thy breath. I feel Thee, my beloved, mighty source of existence! I feel Thee and rejoice in Thee!

(*b*) Eternity offers entirely different perspectives to the soul from those time can offer. Time looks backwards into the past and forwards into the future. Backwards on to the trodden paths of history, then on to the faint traces of prehistory, then it creeps among the thread of tales and myths into an uncertain world, and finally its way comes to a standstill; but when history is struck dumb, when the light of myth goes out and science opens the layers of the rocks of the earth and stones speak of the ancient worlds, then what follows? What then? Oh eternity! We are from out of time and yet we are thy children. Without thee we cannot exist, though with this tiny brain we break down under thy infinite weight. We break down but this is the shudder of the sublime in us, which makes its entrance into our soul and fills its sanctuary with mist and incense. This accordingly is God; this is the necessary, eternal truth that fills my mind; this is the infinite power which created me and lovingly draws my will towards it. He is the original cause. All and everything is from Him and out of Him; the world is His design, the creation of His love.

(*c*) In this creation, in this world, we find that wonderfully unfinished, and yet infinitely valuable work: man. And man reasons and doubts, and thereby and still more by his love and enthusiasm he points to those eternal attractions, which are the centres of the spiritual world as the sun is the centre of the planets, all of which concentrate in God. What a great trouble it is, when man cannot turn towards this sun with trust and joy, when he knows that without it he cannot exist and that elemental forces drive him towards it. What great trouble if he thinks dwarfishly and pettily of the infinite and asks whether it loves him or hates him! What perversities of the human soul are these! This is caused by the philosophy which completely encloses the spiritual life within the "I" and looks upon it as independent from divine influences. This is not right at all, life, the soul, and the world are all filled with God!

Therefore, let us seek God with a loving and longing spirit! Let us humble ourselves before Him in humble faith, for

> Matto è, chi spera che nostra ragione
> Possa percorrere la infinita via,
> Che tiene una sostanza in tre persone.
> State contenti, umana gente, al quia.
>
> (*Dante.*)

(2) *Let us receive with willing joy* God as He comes to us in His revelations; He is the moral world's greatest and most exalted fact, our Lord Jesus Christ. We can

say with Amadé Thierry: "We do not understand philosophy but we can see and admire the great facts of history."

(3) Let us be *attached to Him*, even if we do not fully comprehend Him. Leibnitz made the following remark about the attempts of philosophers to explain the riddle of life: "We may say about these explanations what Queen Christina of Sweden said about her crown: 'I have no need of it, and it does not satisfy me.'"

(4) And let us *love the Lord and live for Him*, let us say with Claude Janet: "*Je parle à Dieu, je l'aime, je l'adore, je l'attends.*"

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT

"*Let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said to him: Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing; but at thy word I will let down the net.*" (*Luke* v. 4.)

(*a*) If it is true at all, it is true concerning souls, that having toiled a great deal we have taken nothing; the tremendous work has little effect. But we must not be discouraged; a great sense of duty and deep feeling accompanies us through all our life. It is God who gave both. Though seeing no result is a great trial, still with the aid of these two gifts we conquer it. At the repeated warning of zeal we also answer: "At Thy word I will let down the net," and we will do so where and when and as often as Thou wishest it. We also know that much toil has success only after many years. Jesus and His Apostles saw little result of their labour, but they knew that their work would bring forth fruit. Working for God and with God we too know this; therefore, onward! An excellent frame of mind is that which does not become maimed by failure, for "deep feeling" leads towards God.

(*b*) "*And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes: and their net broke.*" Jesus wished to recompense and encourage His followers in this way. But this success did not touch the merit of their obedience. It might have happened, that having cast their nets according to the words of Jesus, they caught nothing; Peter might not have been inspired, he might not have become enthusiastic, but his virtue would have been irreproachable. But Jesus helped in the way He did, and Peter was able to experience this help directly and with deep conviction. The hand of God had appeared in his life, and shaken by it he cries: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Thou art so near to me, O Lord, Thou stretchest into my soul, Thou helpest and encouragest . . . lovest and helpest, and at the same time awakenest me to the knowledge of my worthlessness. I am not worthy of Thy helping hand, Thy faithful love. God is near us. What a powerful motive this is for all good.

(*c*) *And Jesus saith to Simon: Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men.* Jesus makes us feel the power of His love and mercy, and he who has once experienced this becomes His follower, disciple and Apostle. Jesus draws us . . . this is His power! St. John the Baptist encouraged men by saying: Repent, for the judgment of God is at hand; and Jesus gave encouragement that the kingdom of God is near, and St. John sums up the Gospel in the following manner: Let us love the Lord, for He first loved us! Only those can be the Apostles of Christ, who have comprehended and return His love!

HEALING OF A LEPER

" *And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down, said to him: If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" (*Mark* i. 40.)

(*a*) Two men face each other: the leper and Christ. The leprous wound sucks up the blood and as rotting life it spreads over the body; the human being withers and becomes disfigured. Contrasted with this, what a sublime image of God is the Son of God! This image of God we can spoil in ourselves; it is sin which spoils it; it beclouds our eyes, beclouds the recognition of sin; it furrows our brows and we become beastlike types; it makes us deaf, it numbs our sense of God; we become tired and sad. How much leprosy there is upon souls; but even if the sores do not corrupt it, where is and what has become of its beauty, strength and nobility? Let us jealously guard and work upon the image of God in us and take care where it is reduced in us, and what causes it to be disfigured in us. If we would come upon a buried Greek statue, or a painting by Raphael in the lumber-room, we would clean and wash it and rejoice at its beautiful lines. This is how we have to act concerning the soul!

(*b*) The leper approaches; like his, the steps of the soul are longing, endeavour, work, sacrifice . . . and it kneels down; this is the greatest step; we reach eternity with it if we do it in faith and humility. Then it beseeches. If we could understand this! If only we could! Let us kneel down and beseech, and beg, only for a few minutes, but with the soul, with the right mind, as the beggar begs for bread.

(*c*) "*If thou wilt thou canst make me clean.*" Loathsome thing to be consumed in dirt, to waste away in the dirt of the soul. Yet this is the dreadful fate of souls . . . to wither in dirt for forty, fifty, sixty years! "If Thou wilt," this is what the saints and the sinner likewise say, "Thou canst make me clean," that is, Thou canst give us a forcible awakening, reactive soul. And to one He gives a soul that does not suffer the slightest dirt upon itself; it is all-luminous; such is the soul of the saints. In others the soul achieves a continual, but slow purification; these are the weaker but endeavouring souls. Others have not valued the soul; the hardened sinners, those who relapse and stumble with a weak, shaken will; these are the ones who have to say with deep faith: If Thou wilt, if Thou wilt . . . Thy will is strength. But on the other hand the Lord urges them: but thou also hast to "will" He says; grace I give, but I also say: If thou wilt, thou canst become clean!

HEALING OF ONE SICK OF THE PALSY

"*And they came to him, bringing one sick of the palsy. . . . And when they could not offer him unto him for the multitude, they uncovered the roof . . . and let down the bed.*" (*Mark* ii. 3.)

(*a*) Jesus entered a house and there the people thronged in. They came because of Christ. He is the centre of the House, of the Church. It is a sublime house; its history is grand, but finally every age seeks only Christ in this House; soul, bliss, sin and grace form the basis and content of every theology, whether we pray in cathedrals or in a tent. The poor swineherd steps into the Gothic cathedral, though he does not understand art and culture; the master-builder also enters as well as the artist, and all three kneel down. And this is the only thing that matters; they seek Christ who takes away their sins, and they wish to be at home in His House. This is what we also have been seeking since the time of Honour: it is for God that men long.

(*b*) "*And there were some of the scribes sitting there and thinking in their hearts . . .*" Who are those who surround Jesus? Critical Pharisees, and ordinary, well-disposed or indolent people, that is the crowd; and finally men of strong faith, who bring the sick one through the roof to Christ; they not only come to Jesus, they also bring others. Their faith and love carry the one sick with the palsy. Christ is the first who carries: He is the "*aquila provocans*," He lifts on His shoulders; the Apostles and Saints carry generations upon their shoulders and in their heart; teachers, parents, and those who give good example equally carry tired, weak, cowardly souls.

Let us carry the weaker ones; it is a great joy to bring souls to Christ. Let us carry forward the ignorant, the sinners, the unfeeling; let us lead them to confession and to the Holy Sacrament!

(*c*) "*Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed and walk?*" "Thy sins be forgiven," says Jesus. A powerful, creative, redeeming summons. For the soul this is the greatest good. If we should do wonders and make the sick rise with a word, we should not accomplish as much as if we pardoned sins in the name of God. Souls with depth in them experience this, though it is the former deed the world values whilst it clings to what is provisional and finite and does not comprehend the graces of the soul. Jesus blames this superficial opinion which looks upon sin, remission, the Gospel, and grace as mere words, but looks upon healing as a deed. Very well, He says, I will enact a deed, a divine deed; I heal the sick, but I do it that ye may look upon the grace of penitence which I brought ye as upon a divine grace. Believe in penitence and acquire it for yourselves. We believe that if we confess with deep contrition, we receive greater grace than if we were miraculously healed.

THE CALLING OF MATTHEW

"*And when he was passing by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith to him: Follow me.*" (*Mark* ii. 14.)

(*a*) Levi, that is St. Matthew, saw the Lord, and knew who He was; he felt how far he was from Him; he saw the Lord in sublime heights and himself in the depths upon the custom-bench. This is where he cheated and extorted money from the people, and they despised and hated him, but Jesus they loved and followed. Jesus did not collect anything from anyone, and still how rich He was; so rich, that He gave to everybody from His riches. How can this mighty, rich Lord look upon him, is what Levi thought. Yes, the Lord looked upon him, with the look of understanding, and calls him to the highest. Others He has rejected, of him he makes an apostle, for He sees his interest, his longing and dissatisfaction. The Lord also calls us by means of duty, recognition, sight, and finally enthusiasm.

(*b*) "Follow me." What summons, what revelation; the sight of Christ shines into his soul and fills it with light and strength. Though this happens in "passing by," it happens victoriously. In the face of this mighty revelation, every other voice is silenced, the heart becomes light, it moves and starts: "I run upon the way of thy commands, if Thou enlargest my heart." This equally is a creative summons; it creates a new man. Do not let us doubt strength; it can do much if it comes upon a soul.

(*c*) "*And rising up, he followed him.*" He arises; this already is another man than the one who formerly sat here. He arises and departs, tears himself away; his heart aches and longs; but his great decision conquers. Such words as "went away," "died," "he arose," are short words; but what worlds they hide; worlds full of ravaging, painful feelings, decisions, and dismay! From these the Lord does not spare us, but He gives us His help, that we may follow Him with steps which take us from world to world. If we come to a purer, more beautiful world, we go willingly indeed!

JESUS EATS WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

"*And it came to pass that as he sat at meat in his house many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples.*" (*Mark* ii. 15.)

(*a*) Jesus obtained deep, sweet grace for Levi—who is our St. Matthew—it conquered him and induced him to follow joyously. Therefore he prepares a feast for the Lord; he rejoices and shows the Lord his gratitude. The Holy Scripture often likens the relation of the soul to

God, to a feast. The soul which loves God is joyous; it feels well even in mist and frost for the Lord. Near to us and with us is the Lord; we rest on His warm heart. Flowers, the scent of the grape, the flavour of the wine, and song, draw out the joy of our soul. Much more than scent and flavour is the Lord to us. Therefore, why should our soul be sad? Pure, transparent, and deep is our joy as the wells of Hellbrunn; soft and sweet is its music as the calix of the flowers!

(*b*) "*And the scribes and the Pharisees, seeing that he ate with publicans and sinners, said to his disciples: Why doth your master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*" Outside, dark, joyless figures loiter, the partisans of conceited truth and self-righteousness, which drives away and does not draw; does not feel intensely and judge correctly. It raises objection against the Saviour out of envy and against the sinners out of haughtiness, and consequently shows its poverty of soul and the desolate barrenness of the conceited frame of mind; it does not ennoble itself and does not better others. Oh, prejudice, thou art also fed from the soul, but only as the mould and mushroom feeds from the sap of the tree! Let us take care of our judgments, that prejudice, narrow-mindedness, unsociability, and bad will should not filter into them.

(*c*) "*Jesus hearing this, saith to them: They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.*" Here it is that Jesus is in His place amongst the misled, seduced people; He did not come to enjoy Himself, but to show men the way. Fasting, prayers, paying tithes for caraway-seed and mint are no good without love of humanity; Jesus teaches them to love. He walks amongst them as the betrothed and wishes to awake bridal joy in them. They shall feel that God is good and that He is the physician of sick souls. Let them feel that He draws them as a loving Father or a betrothed, and that with Him they can settle all the troubles and sorrows of their souls. If they learn this, then they will also fast and keep the law. It is with love that we have to accomplish every religious task.

THE PHARISEES REBUKE OUR LORD

"*Many publicans and sinners sat down together with Jesus and his disciples. And the scribes and the Pharisees, seeing that he ate with publicans and sinners, said to his disciples: Why doth your master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*" (*Mark* ii. 15.)

(*a*) Jesus loves life; He does not turn away from it; The soul whose bliss is in the flowers and in the children stands within life and elevates it. He loved men and sat down with them, that He might conquer in them what had turned away from God, and had fallen away. And as the Prophet Elijah lay upon the body of the dead boy and the boy began to revive, so Jesus also spread His warm strong soul upon them, so that they might also feel, and better hopes might awake in them; He knew that they could only be cured by a life more beautiful than their own and by joys more glorious than theirs; they felt the greatness of His soul and were healed by it. In the background of a glorious sunrise bats still squeak and are annoyed at the miracles of light. Oh, Jesus, our Master, Thou camest to us; and now we respond and follow Thee . . . !

(*b*) *And the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast. And they come and say to him: Why do the disciples of John* *and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples do not fast? And Jesus saith to them: Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? . . . when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them . . . they shall fast in those days.* (*Mark* ii. 18.) Jesus means bridal-feast, joy, and song to us; at the bridal feast we have not to worry about fasting; He did not come to teach us in the first place to fast, but He came to teach us joy, to teach us divine feelings. The faded world has not to be revived primarily by fasting. Fasting and self-abnegation are not aims in themselves, but only means; our aim is to develop in ourselves a mind that clings to God; this shall be our strength and joy and we will be able to subordinate to this the flesh, enjoyment, and the world. Empty formality and joyless, soulless fasts are Pharisaic waste of time; all this is not perfection. It can be scandalized by John, who fasts, or by Jesus, who did not come to us in severity, but in the beauty of divine feeling. We will submit all to this point of view; we will also fast with an obedient soul, but only for acquiring a better soul, a purer and more divine disposition.

(*c*) "*No man seweth a piece of raw cloth to an old garment: otherwise the new piecing taketh away from the old, and there is made a greater rent. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; otherwise the wine will burst the bottles and both the wine will be spilled and the bottles will be lost. But new wine must be put into new bottles.*" (*Mark* ii. 21.) Oh, ye cobblers and patchers, that is, men without conceptions, without great, warm ideas; our troubles and ideas are continually concerned with holes, rents, rags, and patches; ye sin and confess, and confess and sin again; ye dawdle over faults and relapses; ye go to doctors of the soul and the flesh; and there is one thing ye need, and that is that the spring of the great soul of Jesus should live in you, the "*novitas vitae*," the novelty of life, the great, trusting, rejoicing disposition. We do not fear, Jesus is with us; we look into His face in the Gospel; we accept His redeeming grace in our willing and devoted faith; we partake of His soul and life in our filial love, which is always cheerful, and even when it weeps, sheds but the tears of the child. To create afresh and anew, to clothe ourselves in new life—that will be no affair of rags and patches.

(*d*) "*And it came to pass again, as the Lord walked through the corn fields on the sabbath, that his disciples began to go forward and to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said to him: Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? . . . And he said to them: The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath also.*" (*Mark* ii. 23.) The sabbath is for man, that his soul should revive; but man can satisfy his wants also on the sabbath. The spirit never crushes the man, and his institutions serve its development and happiness. The sabbath should also be a spirit and not a letter, and in this case man who has acquired noble liberty by the love of God will dispose the day and do what life according to the ideas of God and its necessities demands.—We also celebrate Sundays and feast-days and we would indeed feel guilty were we to miss the obligatory divine service because of laziness, or because of some other petty reason; but if occasionally we are unable to go to Holy Mass on account of some just cause we need not worry; following the footsteps of Jesus on such occasions we are masters of the sabbath. Thus, Jesus teaches us to comprehend the law more perfectly, and to interpret it more correctly.

THE HEALING OF THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN INFIRM FOR THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS

"*Now there is at Jerusalem a pond, called Probatica, which in Hebrew is named Bethsaida. . . . And there was a certain man there that had been eight and thirty years under his infirmity.*" (*John* v. 2.)

(*a*) To be ill for thirty-eight years with a Christlike soul is a heavenward-aspiring greatness of soul indeed. To say great things is easy; to live in strife and hard labour is easier than to lie ill. Here I lie, says the sick man, my life is useless; I am a burden to others! But what a great life it is, if it possesses the soul which says: It shall not be according to my will, but according to Thine. Therefore we have to esteem and make good use of such a time of trial. All does not depend on health, illness, great deeds, but all depends on whether we accomplish the holy will of God. And is there a greater deed than that of bearing witness to God and His unconquerable grace with patience and goodness, and to give souls the good example of suffering well borne? Many sick-beds are mission colonies. The face of one suffering with patience ranks among our most profound memories; it shines into our soul with encouragement and peace.

(*b*) "*Him when Jesus had seen lying . . . he saith to him: Wilt thou be made whole?*" Wilt thou, really? Dost thou wish for all the conditions and consequences of health and for all its duties? Dost thou wish for it with all the work, self-discipline and self-abnegation? Dost thou wish to become healed and to work for a more beautiful, stronger life? This will exists in few people, for just this indolent, weak, lazy, undisciplined frame of mind is the illness of their soul. But how are we to wish for it? In small, in simple, concrete things we have to educate it in ourselves; we must wish to do this and that and we must carry out our purpose. Let us hate irresolution and indecision. Let us rejoice that we are able to wish with pure, straightforward, healthy mind and soul.

(*c*) "*The infirm man answered him: Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond.*" Sir, I have no man. . . . No man who would strongly, bravely and magnanimously take up my cause. Indeed, this is the complaint of the Church, the people, and the public cause! How many ailing would be healed, if they had a man, a help. How many would rise from out of the depths of misery and darkness, if they had men in whom there is soul, fire, and strength. "*Homo sum,*" says the weak man to excuse himself; so let the strong and efficient man also say, "*Homo sum,*" who is not of flesh and blood, nor of blind, hardhearted nature, but of God. We love and help. Jesus can also complain, pointing to many families, institutions, congregations: I have no men, He might say, who ought to be parents, teachers, shepherds, Apostles! That is why there is so much trouble for few are the men!

(*d*) "*Jesus saith to him: Arise, take up thy bed and walk.*" Behold man! We cannot complain that we have no man; Jesus is our man. He it is who helps us to rise, who heals us, who gives us creative words, soul, and strength. Who wishes to rise shall not wait for future energies, for the welling of mysterious waters; shall not wait for new ideas of culture; neither for moments of emotion and enthusiasm, nor for the pathos of sentiment and inspiration. . . . Jesus is here, and He it is who says: Rise. It would be folly indeed to wait further and to think: I cannot rise! This is mere moral hypochondria, which amounts to blasphemy. We are able to and we will rise.

JESUS SPENDS THE NIGHT IN PRAYER. I

"*And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray: and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God.*" (*Luke* vi. 12.)

(*a*) We have to pray, so that we may be deeply convinced of God and His grace, that we may reach Him, get closer to Him, be more deeply united with Him, so that we should revive in our soul, become purer and develop.

This is the sublime work we enact in our prayers! In them we experience what an immense and inextinguishable great good the Lord is to us; He is the warmth of our heart, its warmth and joy. We do not see the visage of the Lord, and though we know Him to be incomprehensible, yet we feel Him to be real. If we were asked why we cling to Him, our answer would be: brain, heart, sentiment, disposition, will, in one word our soul, our soul binds us to Him. The deepest reflections of philosophy lead eventually to the realm of supposition, from which hang the chains of conclusions which form a connecting link with faith and its mysteries. From the depths of the soul come knowledge and its law, which is logic; thence, too, come the moral law and idealism. The great, starry, flowery world points us to God; but likewise does our inner self point to Him, the clear, moral consciousness, the individual's world filled with inspirations, longings, and inclinations. Let us become absorbed in the necessities of our heart; our heart is one of the most powerful sources of religion; if we start from our heart, from our inner soul-world, we will find the Lord. Thou art here, O Lord, Thou art in us. If we look into ourselves, our consciousness seems as the entrance of the cave through which and out of which we look into a sublimely beautiful, ethereal, glorious world. It is into Thee we look, O Lord, it is Thee we see!

(*b*) Let us seek God in these our soul's intellectual, sentimental, moral ways, and let us be convinced when we are absorbed in ourselves. The wonderful world of the soul is the mirror of God; let us look into it and blaze up with love for Him. Do not let us disdain it, for consciousness is to us the first and chief reality. The outer world also we see only by this inner, mysterious energy. Therefore all that this inner world requires becomes reality. Our life of the flesh requires food, warmth, sunshine, peace, so that it should not perish; this is reality and nature. In like manner, our soul-life, our soul-world, requires God, morals, ideals, eternal aim, and happiness; this also is reality and religion and life. O Lord, give us childlike eyes! With childlike eyes do we look into our soul and into Thee; we continually question Thee and believe in Thy answers, which we hear in ourselves. The world sometimes confuses and nearly alienates us from Thee. A wonderful, heavy curtain is the world, which hides Thee; it is woven from wondrously rich threads of events, which divert attention from Thee and keep it caught in itself; it often opposes our feelings also, for its law is the necessary, mechanical chain of events, and it is this heavy chain which makes all of us groan, but if we turn to our inner self with the sense of strong life, there we will come upon spirit, soul, upon God. These are the sources of life; here we discover strong life's bright warm, sunny atmosphere; here it is that we get rid of the nightmares of pessimism or agnosticism, and rise to glorious heights; it is from here that we see the unbelieving, discordant world's unspeakable misery. From here we view the mutilated fancies of positivism, which would identify the soul, the mind, and the will with motion and impulse; it is here that we can have pity for the moderns raging in the unconsciousness of megalomania; and it is from here that we view humanity whether it be revelling in the sunny garden of life, or sprawling in the darkness of life's misery. We see this hell and turn from it with loathing! How intensely therefore we love thee, our pure, sweet, divine world.

"*Signatum est super me lumen vultus tui.*" Thy visage shineth upon us, that is the infinite, spiritual reality, beauty and goodness, strength and happiness . . . the "all" expressed by infinite, happy life; this is what shines upon us; we are made out of it and we strive towards it, and if we live according to it we are sure to come near it and to live in it. And this means that that wonderful life, that life of ours which presents itself in us and stretches and develops in our longings, will at one time be completely absorbed in it—in that light which is infinitely more beautiful and richer in colour than the sunshine; in that taste which is sweeter and more enjoyable than any flavour or sweetness; in that life which is more full of enthusiasm than any other joy. It calls us to divine life; it gives us strength and grace, so that we should be capable of it! "*Justificabit ipse justus servus meus multos.*" (*Isaiah* liii. 11.) By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.

JESUS SPENDS THE NIGHT IN PRAYER. II

"*And it came to pass in those days, that he went out . . . to pray: and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God.*" (*Luke* vi. 12.)

(*a*) The Saviour was a contemplative soul. Prayer is actual observation. God promises "that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." (*Joel* ii. 28.) The ardent, enthusiastic souls see these things. Our vision is the contemplation of great realities. God comes down to us; He comes near us. He is condescending. (1) *In nature.* Creation in itself is a great condescension of the infinite. It descends upon the ladder of its works, to touch and awake us, so that the soul may realize that everything is filled with God's spirit, that God is dwelling in our midst. (2) God is condescending in *history*, above all in the history of divine contact and revelation. We have understood from the soft voice, from the sweet word, from "the word which became flesh," how near the Lord came down to us; down to the unity of blood, to brotherhood. As the Lord bent down to us from the heights, so He also lifted us to Him and *magnified* us. He could merely have given happiness. . . . My God, for this alone we ought to give infinite thanks, but God also gave us the sonship of God, He gave us divine life and the prospect of our contemplation changing into the vision of Him face to face! It is the God who calls us and draws us whom we have to view in our prayers, and we have to contemplate His traces with ecstasy and fill our soul with them.

(*b*) A praying soul. When ye pray, your hearts shall speak. "Be filled with the Spirit . . . singing and making melody in your heart, to the Lord." (*Ephes*. v. 19.) The heart shall speak because of God who is in it and who fills it with His warmth; let it swim in its feelings; let its wings beat; the soul then speaks, when it is moved; when it is moved by the feeling of depth or the dread of the Sublime, or by the flood of its own incomprehensible instincts. In such souls a psalm awakes from the breath of the infinite. *Hymns* arise from the motives of praise and adoration, *songs* arise because of the feelings of joy, for great is the Lord and He is Holy and also ours, whom we can and must love! Such praying men is what the Apostle wishes for, men who sing "in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles" (*Ephes*. v. 19), and who are able so to beseech that by their humility they bend the divine will. O Lord, Thou gavest us soul, Thou wishest that we should desire; Thou hast caught us in the chains of necessity and the iron clamps of natural law, but Thou hast given us will towering above necessity and natural law; therefore Thou wishest that we should beg, that we should groan and tell Thee what troubles our heart. Thou, O Lord, fillest our soul to overflowing, behold we pour our feelings at Thy feet! Oh, help; help and make us strong! Our soul is as yet undeveloped, lift us to Thyself and give us strength that we may walk the paths of insight and duty with a full heart, and not merely walk but fly along them. Into the meaningless, dry world of social position and official duties we place our heart warmed by Thy touch; we wish to be filled with Thy spirit, that the wayside of our life's dusty roads should also be bright with the flowers of divine feelings.

JESUS CHOOSES TWELVE APOSTLES

"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out . . . to pray: and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when day was come, he called unto him his disciples: and he chose twelve of them whom also he named apostles." (*Luke* vi. 12.)

(*a*) *Jesus* prays on the mountain all night with His soul looking to heaven and filled with God! This is His direction, hither He turns humanity. He prays hard, for He feels what great thing is before Him: He wishes to choose Apostles, who should be His "caliphs," His governors; who should go and act for Him, who should possess His soul. Deep soul is wanted for executing the commission of following the Lord; an absorbed soul is what is wanted, which rises above semblance, surface, and narrow views. Asceticism is wanted for the strong man to be able to rise from out of the crowd! For such souls Jesus prays!

(*b*) The Lord calls them to Himself . . . up to Himself! He seeks for the higher man; the Church also wishes to lift its priests out of the crowd, out of the bonds of sexual life, out of business life, it calls them up to the mountain. It educates them to a nobler, higher mind. Jesus prays the whole night; how intensely has the Church to beg and pray! Those who educate should pray a great deal for souls, that the Lord should give their pupils receptive, great souls. We have to strive up the hill, to Jesus, to His truths and His example.

(*c*) And what sort of men are these the Lord chose? Fishers? How are they clothed? Where do they sleep?

What is their food? How would they enter Roman drawing-rooms? There is no perfume of verbena upon them. How do even the Pharisees look upon them? They are forceful, simple people—*infirma mundi* in the strictest sense of the word, that is, there is little of the world upon them. It is God who made all here; that is His passion; to do all. "It is I who choose you." I rejoice in this absolute, commanding will, as the cloud of insects in the evening sunshine. And what has the Lord produced from them? Fishers of souls, martyrs, saints; the cathedrals of Rome are their mausoleums! And what would have become of them, if they had remained on the sea of Genezareth? Christ, dear Lord, it is Thou who really liftest souls to eternal glory!

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES

"*And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain. And when he was set down, his disciples came unto him. And opening his mouth, he taught them.*" (*Matt.* v. 1.)

(*a*) Jesus talks to the repressed, discouraged people at the time of the merciless, foreign rule. Into the suffering peoples' cloudy world of feelings, at the time of violent Roman politics and Pharisaic formalities, He brings His own great soul. He gives them a direction, which is necessary in the first place, but it is not all. He goes up the mountain. His mountain rises above the mounts of culture. The sun of His divine, unparalleled mentality, the sun of the eight beatitudes rises above this hill. It is from there that the "*invictus sol*" shines towards us. It is a high mountain, it is the height of the new law, of the noble, superior, perfect will. We are on the way towards this mountain; the way leads by steep paths, over rocks and whirlpools; we see how His followers strive towards this mountain; some exhausted and full of burdens, some hesitating and fainthearted; it is upon Christ that we will look; for in spite of His height we feel Him to be near, and we go bravely forward; He it is who will help us.

(*b*) "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Every man's treasure is his soul, and his duty in the first place concerns his soul, not his rights, position, career, and riches. Those are in command of the situation who work with a simple heart and magnanimously for the salvation of their soul, and verily those can be called blessed who are not captivated by economic interest and earthly longing, who are superior to historical and cultural claims. Blessed are these free, emancipated souls! Such are rich in themselves, and from their riches they give to many poor-wealthy ones. Poor in spirit are those who do not know the captivating riches which kill the soul and harden the heart. This poverty of spirit is not beggarliness but nobility.

(*c*) "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*" Blessed are the meek who do not work with violence, hardness, and conceit; whose spirit is not arrogant and who do not know self-conceit, which leads to haughtiness. What profit accrues to the wielders of force if they suffer from the unhappiness of their subjects? The Gospel aims at the happiness of the individual; it measures perfection according to devotion. Strength and power ought to be imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, so that there should be as much morality and as little violence as possible on earth. This does not mean that we should be weaklings and that we should only wish to solve the problems of the world by love; the world has to have a strong hand, there has to be administration of justice and severity; but that is merely the subordinate characteristic of the order of things and not happiness of the soul.

(*d*) "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*" God is the comforter of mankind, tormented with poverty and misery; mankind should expect and seek for its consolation in Him; it will find it. To mourn is no blessing, no happiness, and we need not mourn for the sake of being comforted; but when trouble pours down upon us, let us believe that we have a comforter; the sinner has a comforter as well as the fallen ones, the harassed and the ailing. "That you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope." (1 *Thess.* iv. 12.)

(*e*) "*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.*" The Lord does not like those who are satisfied with themselves and their perfection, who have no wish for more, for what is better; these are corpses. Who, after hearing these words of Christ, can be satisfied with the spirituality already achieved, with the present state of his soul? Who can exist without longings and endeavours? What mountains rise up before us? The mountains of reality, sublimity, knowledge, and magnanimity! The hunger for these is the sign of the health of the soul, the symptom of strength, which stretches, works, and refills itself; this is our road. We believe in our ability to become better and better.

(*f*) "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*" We always find opportunity. We have to lift broken hearts, shipwrecked beings, men who suffer from the consciousness of their sins. "The mercy of the Lord is boundless." In the Lord we find a home, we who in spite of good intentions know what consciousness of guilt and misery mean; it is by the Lord that we learn mercy towards the sufferers in body and soul. In this way we will recognize in the beggar the child of God; it will be our mission to pour the balm of mercy into the heart of others, and the wisdom of life and patience will follow our steps.

(*g*) "*Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.*" There are many different kinds of eyes; some see little, others see more; in the eyes of some the shrub, mountain, forest, turn to masterpieces of colour, wonder, and depth; they have a soul for it. The eyes of the pure in heart are such deep-looking eyes; they see God; recognize Him; world, flowers, thorns, stars, seem different to them; where others see mist and fog, the pure in heart see the sun through the fog, and where others see only darkness they see also stars; they see the Lord: *Dominus est!* . . . Do not let us dull the eyes of our soul with dust, mud, and earth; the brutal man does not see the divine features! What joy it is to see what is divine and one day to see God.

(*h*) "*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*" Jesus always appraises superior spirituality and not stupid passivity; He magnifies peace which is the fruit of goodwill, of strong, patient, prudent, moderate goodwill, not the fruit of aggressive, violent despotism. For this peace we have to struggle much, this peace also holds a sword in one hand and a palm-branch in the other. Let us be at peace firstly with God, that is we should have a pure heart; and we should be at peace with our fellow-men. Irritability is an evil; after every quarrel we own that it would have been better not to have entered it.

(*i*) "*Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Blessed are they who so love righteousness that they suffer for it, who do not yield an iota of their conviction, faith, or virtue, and rather lose all than give way to violence, rather lose favour, promotion, homage, friendship, riches, life. These are the aristocratic souls, in whose eyes the world has lost its value compared to the eternal value which opposes it. Let us not hesitate for a second in the sacrifices small and great that we make for the sake of truth, virtue, and God. We need not be martyrs and still can suffer neglect and resentment for the sake of truth and virtue. This should not disturb us. But we can also suffer in such a way for the sake of righteousness that being innocent we are abused, judged, put to prison, deprived of our position and means. To suffer for the truth and to appear pure only to God, this is true sublimity. The revelation of these souls will be the zenith of the Last Judgment!

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT SUFFER PERSECUTION

"*Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake.*"

(*a*) This "blessedness" suffuses the works of God with wonderful light. So it is possible to suffer persecution for the truth, and divine providence permits this. God loves heroic souls and permits them to be martyrs; He allows hearts to bleed, permits saints to pine away, allows His Son to die upon the Cross. Thus providence looks firstly at the soul; it does not always assure life, wealth, and health, but through pain, loss, and suffering it takes care of the soul. The aim of providence is not worldly happiness—suffering and bitterness may be our portion—but happiness of the soul we can rightly have in spite of persecution and anguish. In good and bad fortune, health and illness, wealth and poverty, we should always look to the soul, it is the soul we should love and take care of, in co-operation with divine providence.

(*b*) To suffer for the sake of righteousness means to suffer unjustly and not because of one's fault. How many men have been condemned to death unjustly, how many girls seduced by violence, how many have been ruined by the fault of others, how many despair because of failure and bad judgment! And man says: Why does not God destroy the evil ones with His lightning and how can He allow these abominations? I would not allow them if I had my way! Behold the great complaint against providence and God's answer to it: Blessed are they who suffer for the truth. Our life is subject to physical laws and is under the influence of the free will of others; to demand miracles from God against physical dangers is unreasonable, and to interfere with the free will of others by means of immediate punishment or reward, would put a stop to moral order. The world would be a puppet-show. In God's scheme for the world free morality has to develop, and the avenging divine hand is not allowed to stand in the foreground. We are not to avoid wrong for fear of punishment, nor do good for the sake of reward; this would be a low standard of morality. We have to assert the moral order in spite of physical laws and brutality, and we have to believe that our losses do not deprive us of our heaven. Amidst physical misfortunes and cruelties this is the knowledge we have to be conscious of: we carry an immense treasure within ourselves; we will not give it up, no one can take it away from us, and not for anything will we lose it.

(*c*) Let us adore God, when our soul groans amidst conflicts. Our feelings and sufferings are merely fragments of stone in the structure of the world. God's way is divine, so let us not be astonished that the divine is not exactly as the human! . . . Our most important task is dauntless, devoted, perseverance; not soft feelings shall guide us, but the words of St. Paul: Who tears us away from Christ?

LIGHT AND SALT OF THE EARTH

"*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men.*" (*Matt.* v. 13.)

(*a*) There is much evil in the world; it is like the stable of Augeas and the swamp of Lerna. Swamp is corruption, and darkness the frivolous, immoral opinions of the masses; want of character amounts to friendship with sin and malice. "Ye are the salt of the earth." . . . Be the enemies of sin, for the Lord has placed enmity twixt your soul, your grace, your spirit and those of ruin and sin; this is your glory. Let us fight against that poverty which leads to sin; against tyranny and selfishness which oppress whole strata of society; against uncleanness which serves the reign of instinct and its degeneration. Let us realize that we are struggling with the devil, who is cruel, murderous, immoral, evil, and full of hate. Do not let us expect anything else from him and his followers. We should not be scandalized by the power of decay and its sad work. The salt of the Gospel is inexhaustible. It disinfects our souls and kills the bacillus of corruption if we but use it prudently and with energy. Let us all, especially the priests, struggle against every evil. Let us read the letters of St. Paul and think on the slightest good that we have succeeded in doing and rejoice in it.

(*b*) "*You are the light of the world.*" This is what the Lord means concerning the priests: You are placed in the darkness as columns of fire. (1) Through your lives. For Herculean work a Hercules is needed; we must not object to this. We have to be greater, we have to be Christlike. Our personality must exemplify a programme which has a definite aim, which encourages the weak, incites, supports. (2) By your teaching. Filled with the spirit of God, let us lead mankind to Christianity; not only that they may know the Catechism, but that we may help them to raise their inner self and to comfort them. They have to experience God and to feel His wonderful grip on the heart. Our religiousness often wavers between superstition and materialism. (3) Lead mankind to a rational, simple way of life and work, which they should live as men and not as beasts, and encourage whatever endeavours lift mankind out of sensuality and beastliness, whether it be in the name of art, science, hygiene, or social action. It is a wonderful vocation to serve the cause of enlightenment; this is the real sunshine; the real strength and joy of God; the glory of Christ!

(*c*) And if the salt itself rots, if Apostles and priests weaken, if the light goes out and double darkness covers the paths of heaven, what deep sorrow is upon the face of Christ, what fresh shame and misunderstanding descend upon His Gospel! This is the loathsomeness of decay in the holy place! This is bringing faith, grace, and the Sacraments into disrepute. Whole nations become ailing, and humanity, misled by the power of worldly feeling, sacrifices to false gods. Be thou the salt of that company and the light of that house in which God has placed thee; do not wait for others to be good; be thou good; do not wait for others to give light and warmth, "thy light shall light." Dangerous is that frame of mind which expects every good only from others; salt and lamp is what we have to be through our healthy, strong, Christlike mind.

JESUS CAME NOT TO DESTROY THE LAW. I

"*Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*" (*Matt.* v. 17.)

(*a*) There is law, but with thee it only means letter and formality; thou dost not apply it to ideas, thoughts, feeling, and will; I have to fulfil it, that is, I have to teach thee so that thy spiritual world shall be that of goodwill, truth, straightforwardness, sincerity, and beauty. God appears to us as truth, goodness, beauty, strength; zeal for Him walks the ways of obedience; longing for the ideal life and the strength of passion demands the detailed work of discipline; with this we arrive at real liberty and individuality. To fulfil the law, that is to want according to the law, to correct the half-truths of sentimentality; we have not to suffer constraint but to persecute despotism in ourselves.

(*b*) "*You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.*" Anger is usually violent and unjust, it mostly has claws; in the pure, ethic sphere there is no place for such brute force. There is temper and passion in us, as well as uneducated inclinations; we have to curb and train them; every temperament shall pay homage to the moral order. Let us have strength to be masters also in storm. It is then that we sin, when passion runs away with our insight and moderation, and degrades us.

(*c*) "*And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out . . . if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off.*" The spirit has to fight against its own nature, against fallen nature; nobly has the spirit to break with attachment and soft feeling for the sake of salvation. If it does not do it, its life is death; if it does it, even its death will be life. Goethe said: "die and live"; we have to sacrifice for the fuller and more beautiful soul. We shall turn away our eyes for sake of the spiritual light and restrain our hands so as not to become soiled. At the time of Napoleon's Russian war the initial N of Napoleon was branded on the arm of a Russian peasant; the Russian cut his arm off; he did not want to belong to Napoleon; his heart was the Tsar's. Our heart belongs to God; we arrange everything according to this.

JESUS CAME NOT TO DESTROY THE LAW. II

"Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (*Matt.* v. 17.)

(*a*) He does not destroy the law but fulfils it, that is, in place of its chapters and symbols He places reality; He explains the letter which kills, by the spirit. He does not evade the law, for the law is for the beautiful life; therefore he who wishes that life has to live according to the law. Law is not something that is dictated to us as a set of formulas; but it is the outline of life; this is the way our mind, our heart, our ideal aim looks upon the law and identifies itself with it and willingly chooses to fulfil it. Let us love the divine will, for this is our own rightly recognized and deepest will. The righteous one has no law, in so far as he completely identifies himself with the divine will, and that is why he does not feel constrained by forms and regulations.

(*b*) "*For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.*" We put the whole man under the law of Christ and in our moral life keep that law to the last jot. Where one has to feel, suffer, and love, we only recognize one point of view: that of Christian morals. Therefore (1) our worldly wisdom does not consist of crumbs of philosophy but of the mighty system of eternal life's principles. When we speak of life, our whole soul becomes filled with the consciousness of our *Credo*, of our faith. Our ideal is Christ; the Gospel to us is not a doctrine, but "*Dei virtus.*" (2) Our culture is not civilization, institutions, knowledge, and art, but pure morality, the pure state of being children of God—"race"—"*tertium genus*." (3) To us morality is liberty and release; release from beast-like, instinctive, sensual, violent, distorted existence. Morality to us means spirituality, that is rising from the blindness of matter. To us morality is strong, united will; to will what God wills. (4) Progress to us does not mean philanthropy and altruism, which look for things to be done in others and not in oneself. The "I" begins in ourselves and ends in ourselves; I am in the first place, neither you nor he. Therefore it is senselessly insufficient to seek progress in altruism, for this concerns our relation to other things, that is, to formality and outwardness; whereas our morality and perfection is latent in our purified, ennobled spirituality which clings to God, and His supremacy above sensuality and selfishness. If there were no other man in the world, or if we were hermits, even then we could be deeply moral. Therefore it is in ourselves that we have first of all to shape a purified, beautiful, noble spirituality.

(*c*) "*He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments and shall so teach men shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*" To unite these two: the ideal and reality! This costs much; it is not easy. We know that there are many ignoble, bad inclinations in us, those we have to break and ennoble. Our soul is no garden of Eden, where saints walk; our burden is sin, and our greatest necessity is mercy. We cannot look in the eyes of eternal life if we carry death in our soul, and from that neither knowledge, music, nor sport will release us. Our energy is not a conceited optimism which says "that we can do all, if we only want to."

We neither know enough, nor can we do all. The needs we have are the needs of depth, and these are solely satisfied by faith. What we need is redemption and divine force, we need consolation which men and the world cannot give. Facing incomprehensible life and death, we can entrust our soul only to the consoling love of God, for that alone is reasonable, and to the hope springing from it!

(*d*) Who teaches and does not act is a poor figure; poor and sad also are those who believe and teach without the devotion of a life. Such prepare to create life and to shape the depths of existence to consciousness, and behold they snatch after small petty patterns instead of faithfully following the great ideals, and beside the grace of God they listen to nerve excitements and impressions. They would be Michael Angelos and become village potters; they would be Beethovens and are impressed by the chirping of the sparrows. Oh, the poor, bungling souls! Oh, my God, we unconditionally go after Thee and live what we believe. Thou sufficest us! Jesus is our pattern; we shape our life according to Him; so we escape the accusation made against us, that upon torn garments—mantles of Socrates, togas of Plato and palliums of Zeno—we put Christian patches and are after all only mending tailors. No, no, we are " the seed of God," we are of the school of Christ. His words and His example are spirit and life in us.

ANGER

" *But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And* *whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*" (*Matt.* v. 22.)

(*a*) Not to be angry, not to quarrel and offend but to bear goodwill towards our fellows is what we have to do. We have to feel that love streams from our heart and that we attract. What can bring this to be? Not beauty which attracts but only superficially; not knowledge which when it goes hand-in-hand with pedantry is unbearable; nor a superior, strict, exacting virtue; but a disposition and frame of mind, which wants the good, which elevates—which does not make its own superiority and others' smallness felt, but forms and guides. This is the really superior and moral disposition. This disposition can adapt itself; it does not command and dispute, but makes the unstable ones understand what they are to do, and imperceptibly makes good what the other spoils, neglects, or forgets. It is to its surroundings as spring is to nature; its scent, beauty, and warmth are felt without violence! To practise this is bliss indeed!

(*b*) Quarrelsomeness is the disharmony of our own soul; the dirty stream of our irritability pours from it, and it is we who suffer by it mostly, whether it originates from our roughness and rudeness, or our faintheartedness and repugnance. Others may also be guilty and circumstances unbearable, but however it may be, we must not allow ourselves to become embittered and infuriated. Therefore we endeavour to be of service to others and to be their consolation and help. If others want something that is not sinful, we willingly help. We look upon repugnance as a mere weakness of our nature, which is of no importance and should not affect our decisions. Concerning it we willingly make the sacrifice of resignation, self-abnegation and willing advance. God is our example, we look to Him.

(*c*) Economic strife and the war of principles estrange men from each other, for there is love in neither. Let us sometimes declare a truce and approach our fellow beings with love; let us forget the strife, hurt, and sorrow, and endeavour only to understand and forgive. By so doing we correct the onesidedness of our minds and prevent an increase of repugnance and estrangement. Let us sometimes say to ourselves: to-day we forgive, to-day we forget all; to-day we wish to love in all straightforwardness and sincerity. We wish to be good, to be of use to everyone. "All things whatsoever you would that man should do to you, do you also to them." (*Matt.* vii. 12.)

THE LAW OF CHASTITY. I

"*You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" (*Matt.* v. 27.)

(*a*) Against this old law the world is weak. In a barbarous way it breaks the fine sense of purity. In its bloom it withers and consumes the strength of youth, dries up the sources of ideal attachments and true poetry. With the pure blood, the energy of life is also spent and we can reproach youth with the most bitter elegy: *cinis est cor ejus*, its heart is ashes, its blood spittle. Impurity dulls ideals. Everything ought to be directed towards serving ideal aims; nature, teaching, art, the training of the body should work with religion to help the pure, moral life to develop, so that every child of God should become disciplined in body, consciously pure in soul, should develop to an individuality capable of ruling its instincts. This will be our endeavour, and at all costs we will strive to show in deeds and in the assertion of a victorious will the commands and the grace of God.

(*b*) There is no commandment without its corresponding grace. When God commands, He also gives strength for it. We have *first* to be deeply convinced that just as we would rather die than consciously acquiesce in a sinful thought, so God will give us grace at all times for conquering temptation. This conviction becomes elevated to a prayer each time we think of the great duty of purity and its fiery ordeal; and every time we are involved in these battles let us pray so that we may be filled with the awe of God and the loathing of sin. Let us pray that we may have strength to conquer temptation. Let us cast our eyes down and say with contrition: Lord, Lord, help us! *Secondly*, we have to educate ourselves to valuing purity, so that we see the holy will of God in it, which commits purity to our soul as the correlative of the development of nature and strength: so that in the battles fought for purity we see the assertion of strength of will and of character, which is the condition of noble feeling and of the development of a beautiful, sublime, happy, inner world. For impurity only develops ignoble feelings, which in the higher cultures amount to outward propriety meant only for the eye. According to Holy Scripture, "*reprobus sensus*," base, perverse feelings, grow in impure souls, which equally show themselves in modern sexual over-excitement. *Thirdly*, let us recognize and rightly estimate our natural instincts and all that can awake impurity in us, and let us take up a right point of view concerning these. The lower life has two focuses: selfishness and longing for pleasure.

Selfishness can spoil our judgment, pleasure can poison our flesh. These natural forces have to be moulded and the harmony of virtue has to be spread over them with the aid of the law. It is not possible to set the instincts free; they have to be conquered. The modern age wants to succeed with sexualism without violence and moral battles; it raves of free love, of new sexual relations, and through these it hopes to pour satisfaction on unbridled longings. In opposition to this, let us believe the words of Christ which say: I bring not peace but a sword. Here a sword is needed, here we have to cut and conquer; only then will there be peace.

(*c*) Let us ennoble our senses, especially our eyes, so that we shall not look at or read anything that incites us to sin. Let us always seek for God's ideas, and for the soul. Real beauty not only brings forth feelings, but also ideas. How many see only the lovely body and are the victims of it; the cult of the beautiful weakens when it only vibrates on the surface; in the shape of sensual beauty we always have to look for the element which is significant for the soul, the element which affects and touches the heart. Let us further remember that impurity destroys true love; it profanes the soul and drags it down to the shame of blind passion; it degrades itself and the object of its love, and deprives itself of the bliss-giving consciousness of self-esteem and reasonableness. Brothers, let us mould the instinctive animal elements into the shape of virtue and discipline. Let us fight and strive, and let us have ardour for the strife; the love of God and the awe of God should inspire us. Let us pray in our temptations and approach Jesus in the Sacraments. The Sacraments of Penance and Holy

Communion are capable of educating a pure race, if we partake of these Sacraments with great consciousness and true faith. Behold the food of the Angels, the bread of wayfarers! Through it the travellers through life become angelic!

THE LAW OF CHASTITY. II

"*But I say to you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (*Matt.* v. 28.)

(*a*) Jesus wished to educate divine men and to clothe them in superior beauty. And just as art breaks shapelessness with shape and conquers material with beauty, so the Lord Jesus had to break the instinctive man by morality and to create in the first place holiness, inspiration, beauty, and strength, that the "*tertium genus*," the divine man, might arise. He creates this by assuring a pure, healthy atmosphere. This is given to the soul by truth, by idealism, by strength of will, and martial spirit. It is necessary that our ideas be not dark, impotent, or wild; it is necessary that our feelings be not sickly and hysterical. Concerning sexual life the sons and daughters of the modern age grow up in an unhealthy atmosphere, which is filled with weakening allurements. Their outlook is tainted, they are the victims of exaggerated sexuality. Their art is the slave of this problem; their life resembles more and more that inferior animal-world, the chief function of which is to conceive. This one-sidedness guides feeling and disposition in a wrong, unhealthy direction, more and more in the direction which the Apostle characterizes: "*in ignominiam . . . in reprobum* *sensum . . . stulti facti sunt . . . digni morte*," decadent, perverse people. Contrary to this, the pure, moral man's ideas are filled with common sense and the light of faith. In the woman, he sees a companion and only expects so much pleasure from sexual relations, as he can win by way of virtue. He is not intoxicated, not neurasthenic and does not tear the flowers of love, but tends and enjoys them according to the will of God! Oh, ye who love humanity, ye sweet Utopians, who demand sunshine, forest-breeze, and blue sky for the town-folk, demand in the first place sunshine and fresh air for their souls, that they should not fade in the unhealthy atmosphere of immorality! Oh, ye who teach mankind that their houses should not be low haunts, teach men that their heart and soul should not be the low haunt of disgusting ideas, rotting feelings and desires. Oh, ye who wish to reform life with art, bring men to their senses that they carry the shape of virtue into their inner life, their feelings and ideas, and that they assert in this ugly chaos the power of discipline and self-negation; then they will also better understand the Lord Jesus, whose first demand is the pure heart, the pure spiritual world, which informs the whole man and his whole life. My Lord, a pure heart create in me; pure, noble ideas, and feelings full of strength we ask of Thee for our soul, that it should not fade. We will fight with all our strength against impure ideas and desires.

(*b*) The Lord gives us strong, blossoming, spring-like force of life. If in place of beauty and virtue we have beast-like instincts, then every tie is loosened and the root of the strength of the nations' life rots. Impurity is fire which consumes life in its blossom; not only the marrow, but with it the joy of life, energy, and the creative genius. This is nowhere to be experienced so much as in case of self-pollution; self-pollution truly draws the forces of life, the vital fórces, into a swamp, and such a generation justifies the words of Dr. Bouffon, who says that the great part of humanity dies by self-murder. So nature, which has been profaned in its forces and defamed in its life-giving vocation, will rise up in arms against us and instead of being the source of life, will become that of decay and death. Nature full of vital strength, which lives inside the borders and boundaries of virtue, begets life; violated, defamed nature spreads misery in its children, unfit for life. Impurity poisons the source of the life of nations; at the door of the brothels Satan and death are sitting. All ye doctors who wish to secure for humanity pure blood and fresh soul and joy of life, struggle against the bacillus and against prostitution, but also keep in mind that the soul and strength of human life is moral, and that without moral strength, without self-denial, penance, discipline, and prayer, ye only support drunkards with all your science; they are not men, but sacks; these ye can never teach to struggle and to conquer; if they wake from their trance, and if they will and struggle and make sacrifices, then they will prosper. Let them approach Jesus; His heart is life, strength, and burning love. He burns so as to ignite. His cross is the sign of life, let us crucify upon it the death living in us, sin and the devastating, murderous agonies of passion, and then we will live. Let us be united with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist; this Holy Feast imparts to us the pure, shining, blossoming world of His divine soul which is full of vital strength; thus death perishes and life lives.

SIMPLICITY OF SPEECH

"*Again you have heard . . . Thou shalt not forswear thyself . . . but I say to you not to swear at all . . . But let your speech be: Yea, yea: No, no. And that which is over and above these is of evil.*" (*Matt.* v. 33.)

(*a*) Jesus wishes sincerity and straightforwardness. Telling the truth is the service of truth that we do for our companions. The Christlike soul does not lie, neither when it talks, nor when it is silent. Secrets have to be kept; to be clumsy and indiscreet is not Christianity; we have always to act as those who serve the truth. When there will be more of us who feel like this, then there will be no need amongst us for oaths. Let us love the truth bravely; let us have faith in it and persevere in our convictions. It is easy to live with convictions in a hidden place or amongst men who agree, but very difficult in an inimical and disunited world. Who argues much and looks in many directions becomes cowardly and easily lies. What we want and strive after is a Christ-like soul.

(*b*) "*You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other.*" There is a law for revenge and reprisals, we have a right to this and that, we have a right towards others, which it is forbidden to offend. True, the law and right are necessary; they are the corner-stones of life, but at the same time a one-sided and not very elevating fact. Do not let us trust too much that they will enrich our life and make it happier. Of law there is sufficient; but let us give more good-will, noble feelings, brotherliness, willingness, and readiness for service. For law is after all an impersonal strength; and we long and wish for a loving, noble personality. Let us be generous, noble sons of our Father, who makes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust; let us love our fellow-men, even if they do not love us much, and let us influence them and value them so as to raise them.

(*c*) "*Judge not, that you may not be judged.*" (*Matt.* vii. 1.) Do not judge with inimical feelings, neither from subjective points of view; this will be a guard against many mistakes and injustices. If our feelings and our personality creep into our judgments, how can we then be just? Therefore, when we judge we have first to acquire a noble, emancipated, unprejudiced disposition; we shall will the good and will it well. Do not let us judge harshly; let us remember our own instability, and how much was needed till we achieved something worth mentioning, if in fact we are better than others! "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Strict, harsh judgments are mostly the outcome of a lack of self-knowledge; let us be conscious of our feebleness and our faults.

DO NOT YOUR JUSTICE BEFORE MEN

"*Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen. . . . And when you pray, you shall not . . . pray in the . . . corners of the streets.*" (*Matt.* vi.)

(*a*) Do not let us care in the first place for the exterior, the colour and semblance; for the outward is the flower of the inward; the outward is the scent and warmth of the heart. It is this inwardness we have to tend, then its strength and light will break through. What is the use of the exterior if it is not the radiation of the beautiful inner world? What is the use of a lovely tombstone? Between zeal and hypocrisy there is the same difference as between a lovely face and a painted mask. Poor, empty mask! What we need is strength, joy, life, and ardour. This fills us and enables us to reform the outer world.

(*b*) Accordingly, we shall shut ourselves up in our inner self. In this holy seclusion the Lord is present. "*In indepicto fundo cordis*," in the transparent depths of the soul, there where we have parted with appearance and illusion, there where with pure child-eyes we have seen and recognized ourselves, there it is that God and we meet, where the soul and the Father meet. "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy father which is in secret." Who has entered this closet is less liable to distraction. The deeper we sink into ourselves, the better we pray.

(*c*) Educated people as a rule do not willingly take part in public profession of their faith, such as processions, etc. This disinclination ought to be corrected. We have to take part in the exterior worship of God. It is the will of Jesus, as we have also to adore God in company and brotherly union; but otherwise, let us only penetrate into the depth. At the public service of God, humility and acknowledgment of our faith also form part of the real inner values.

FAST NOT AS THE HYPOCRITES

"*And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head.*" (*Matt.* vi. 16, 17.)

(*a*) Not for the eye, for what good is that? Let us do all for the soul. Fasting is the help of the soul against the flesh. The body is heavy, lazy, instinctive, given to excess, and with its weight it crushes the soul. Soul we need in this body, soul which is light, ordered, willing, disciplined agile, strong, quick, and tenacious; which does not lie inert but reaches outward and upward. If we verily fast then we pray more willingly; our spiritual world is purified, there is not so much dusk and fog upon our souls; our instincts are not so fiery and violent but more godly. And fasting is also our penance; for we punish ourselves.

(*b*) "*Therefore when thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee.*" (*Matt.* vi. 2.) In the service of the eyes, the heart and soul become lost. The left hand steals the good from the right one. Human glances are all thieves. They are like exhibition wine-flasks; the flask and the label are there, but only water is in them . . . water, only water, stale, tasteless water. The moral value has fallen out; the heart is empty. Goodwill and nobility of heart give value to alms; if we lack these we are simply throwing our money into the streets.

(*c*) We are full of formality; the husks of good actions exist but their seeds have fallen out. Our heart is an empty vessel and our soul a shadow. Therefore, we have to fill it with feeling and life. Whether we eat meat to-day or not, in this we follow the letter of the law; but let us go deeper by experiencing our sins and the sufferings of Christ; we can weave all and everything into soul and feeling; fasting also can become expiation, homage, humility; in a word, it can become divine life. It is this warm life that man forgets; there is little of religion in him, little of it in the form of an experienced idea; man has emotions but he cannot create a "godly kingdom" out of them; he is incapable of finding pleasure in them. He can neither believe, nor be reassured, he cannot be animated nor pleased. Let man find pleasure in humble homage, and joy in the purification of the soul by which it achieves love of the betrothed. Oh, yes, let us experience our soul, let us rise and rejoice; otherwise what Eckhardt said in the Middle Ages may be applicable to us: "What is the use of my being a king if I am not aware of it?" We have to experience our soul.

PRAY IN SECRET

"*But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret.*" (*Matt.* vi. 6.)

(*a*) To pray . . . to spread and stretch our soul towards God as the butterfly stretches its wings in the sunshine, to absorb the divine impressions, light, and energy, and then to experience them; this is what we have to do. This is continuous, silent prayer and life. God imparts Himself and we experience Him. Albeit we have work to accomplish and a vocation upon earth, let us not forget to shape and form our consciousness and inner soul-world. Much energy is spent on earning our daily bread, on obtaining power, culture, and pleasure; let us put much energy into prayer also. Nature wants strong lions, strong eagles, strong lilies. Our own feelings also urge this, therefore let us develop our consciousness beautifully, nobly, virtuously; let us build it up according to Christ-like motives. There have been silent artists who have spent their whole lives carving one portal, painting the initials of one book; we also are such silent artists, we work upon our life during our whole life. This is true art, which has no mercenary motive.

(*b*) Let us do everything for the higher life. The essence of life is not gain, success, and effect; not the work one accomplishes outside oneself, but that which one shapes in oneself. If we cannot create masterpieces in marble, colour, wood, word, and sound, no matter; the important thing is to do so in our own feelings. We work out existence so that it becomes feeling, trust, hope, peace, love, joy, harmony, beauty, music; we shape instinctive nature into liberty and liberty into Christlike personality. To achieve this we devote time and energy. We will not look upon the time spent in meditation and in putting our souls in order as lost. Our object is that we should not act according to the impulses of our instincts but that we should drive these instincts into our service. We honour the mystical souls, for they breathe life as the forests and are peaceful as the valleys; these are the souls who experience and write *The Imitation of Christ*.

THE OUR FATHER

"*Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven.*" (*Matt.* vi. 9.)

(*a*) Our Father . . . Thou sweet, strong, personal spirit . . . filled with bounty. It is when we call Thee Father that we approach Thee most. The inspiration of our heart is needed; our mind walking on wooden legs stumbles upon the way of seeking God. Therefore our "conceptions of God" are anæmic or even distorted ideas. God is life and spirit, and our ideas about Him are weak and our imagination deceiving. With this word "Father," our "Father," Jesus showed us the way upon which we can go towards God. Do not let us torment ourselves with other ideas, let us love and be children. Let us hand ourselves over to our Father and to Christ, whom He sent, as the Gospel teaches us. Let us approach Him with loving faith, with humble, atoning, longing will, which is full of homage. In these feelings the soul shows a fine sensitiveness; without them it becomes dark, fades, and dries up. Therefore let us strive to draw near to God, to His sheltering, encouraging, reassuring presence. He is our Father and our strength; we draw strength from Him; only thus can we progress; He makes up our insufficiency; we revive from His touch. One drop of His sweet love is worth more than an ocean of knowledge. Oh, our dear Father, speak to Thy children; fill us with consolation and reassurance. *Pater mi, pater mi!*

(*b*) "*Hallowed be thy name.*" We need inspired reverence towards the eternal, infinite Sublimity; we have to adore Him. We are small and finite: Thou, our Father, art infinite; we live in time and space, Thou art eternal. Thou art the great Lord, we are Thy servants, and in us Thy greatness and the dependence of the world on Thee develop to consciousness. We honour Thee, and look upon Thee and up to Thee with deep reverence, to Thee who holdest us above the depths, not in order to throw us down into them, but for our salvation. Therefore our reverence turns into love and joyously we say: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are filled with His glory. Yes, filled it is to those whom the Lord fills; filled with strength and beauty to those who know Thee; but to those who do not know Thee, the earth is full of incomprehensibility, suffering, and darkness. Oh, Lord, draw us on, so that we may feel Thee, lift us so that we may praise and glorify Thee for ever. We will endeavour to exalt Thee in ourselves. . . . What grace and happiness that we can do so!

(*c*) "*Thy kingdom come.*" Yes, Thine. Others also have kingdoms; nations have kingdoms as well as science and culture. These kingdoms do not satisfy; they spread and become larger in time and space, but do not approach the heights and depths of the heart. Thy kingdom, O Lord, fills these depths and guides us to these heights! Thy kingdom is strength, life, and joy in the heart and soul; Thy kingdom further is the more just, more noble, and more human earthly existence; Thy kingdom is the great unity of souls, the Holy Mother-Church, and, at last, eternity. Something of this, Thy kingdom, already exists in us and around us; we beg Thee to see that it ever grows in us. Let our souls develop, let the world develop according to Thy ideas; let everything prosper. Let there be less darkness, suffering, ruin, and death around us; let us recognize Thy infinite bounty in Thy works! It is in this Advent that we live, we live in the hope that the kingdom of God will spread, and we work for this . . . Thy kingdom come, this is what every prayer of ours, all work and strife, breathes!

(*d*) "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" Thou art unconditional in existence, holy and perfect in will! But Thy will is not human, and Thou infinitely surpassest the measure of human conceptions, ideas, and feelings. Thou arrangest all the good and evil. Evil also, from that we cannot flee, for we are being ground in the mechanism of the world, but Thou orderest the evil also for moral good. Therefore we must not grow faint because of troubles and strife; even when the wave of bitterness overflows us, let us ask immediately: What are we to do to obey the will of God? Dull, flat suffering is not His will; trusting, striving, patient suffering is what God wishes. In all else also we will do what mind and faith, nature and grace propose. This is the will of the Lord. The will of the Lord will always be done if we do justice to the believing, trusting soul and lift it above the world, bitterness, toil, and strife.

(*e*) "*Give us this day our super-substantial daily bread.*" We have necessities and claims; we need bread, clothes, and a house to live in; we need a little portion of the world, so that our soul can develop in it. The world should not overcloud the soul, but neither should the soul waste away for want of the world. Give us as much as a simple, unpretentious, noble life demands. Many souls waste away not from want, but from abundance or a too ardent chase after what is necessary. What good are nervous excitement and pleasure which ruin healthy life? The words of Bouffon are true: men do not die, they kill themselves . . . by a senseless way of living. "Make the stones become bread," says modern soul-and-body-killing work; but what is the good if we die from all this bread? The bread also becomes stone to us. Let us value simple food, good water, air, and our night's rest. O Lord, teach us to live!

(*f*) "*And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.*" As we wish to live corporally so we have to wish to live all the more spiritually. This wish is the deepest and most glowing longing of the heart, it is the cry of the soul: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and do not despise my supplication, hearken to me and hear my cry." Forgive our sins, this is what we ask of Thee. This we can merely beg for, because, as for us, this can neither be the subject of merit or striving, only of grace. Only Thou canst give it. If Thou givest this to us, then we live; if Thou dost not give it, then we die for ever. Willingly will we fulfil all on which this grace depends; I repent, confess, atone, and still more: I will do as Thou wilt, I hope, do to me. I will also forgive, forgive from my heart and forgive truly, for I hope Thou wilt do likewise with me. We will speak to those we are angry with. Thou hast said elsewhere that church, sacrifice, and altar will be no help to us if we are angry with our brother. And verily, why do we ask for forgiveness, that is for merciful love, if we do not show love, goodwill, and the soul of unity towards others? "I wish for mercy and not for sacrifice."

(*g*) "*And lead us not into temptation.*" In life there is much darkness, difficulty, strife and incomprehensibility. These are the temptations of our soul. We pray, and the Lord does not hear us; we suffer unjustly; what we need is patience towards nature and mankind; the balance of our soul becomes disturbed; we do not understand ourselves and the world. Our God, lead us not into temptation; do not cover us with darkness; do not let us feel the cruelty of existence and of strife. Temptations we will have, our instincts will contradict our conscience; the flesh, the world, and the devil are not dumb; grant that we may hold our ground; give us a persevering, brave soul, ready for sacrifice in our temptations. Give us the necessary bravery to do good and do our duty! But, for our part, let us also do all so as not to enter into temptation; let us beware of the paths of evil in our thoughts, feelings, and imagination. Let us mistrust everything that disturbs the peace of the soul. The disturbance of the soul's balance is easily followed by shipwreck.

(*b*) "*But deliver us from evil.*" The personal evil is the devil. The Holy Scripture points to him and there is no psychology which is able to explain the obscuration of our soul life and its bitter disturbances; doubt and distrust often originate from him; dark, cold ideas concerning God and His grace can also be ascribed to the nearness of the devil. Deliver us from the evil which walks the earth and which is already so cold and dark and kills life, and deliver us still more from the evil beyond; guard us so that we may not be at its mercy! This is what casts body and soul upon the fire of Gehenna. Save us, Our Lord, from eternal death. Here the curse of "evil" is sin and death, and beyond it is eternal damnation.

THE EYE THE LIGHT OF THE BODY

"*The light of thy body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome.*" (*Matt.* 6. 22.)

(*a*) Our eye is our soul; its light is poured out on us. Verily our soul is poured over our body; it can plunge us into fever and infect us. Sin, which is in the will, disturbs the body also. Anger, envy, grief, jealousy, and anxiety poison us; discord and bad temper are worse than infected atmosphere. The sweat and spittle of the infuriated, agitated man is poisonous, the soul has poisoned it with its own ideas, imaginations, and desires. Whereas love, joy, and animation give fresh strength and youth; they also build and shape the body. Therefore we have to wash out from our soul every distracted, miry, languid, angry, mean feeling; we have to secure and allow the crystal-streams of the soul to go unhindered. No one shall say, I cannot; no one shall believe in evil, but he shall believe in good and its strength; he shall think and love with the ideas and love of God.

(*b*) Let such a luminous soul radiate from us; the world takes upon itself the colour in which we clothe it. "The soul is all; what we believe, we will become." "Make your soul the home of beautiful ideas. No one knows, for no one has tried it from early youth, what fairy castles of happiness we could build from noble, good ideas, in which we could securely find refuge amidst our struggles." (*Ruskin.*) It is true indeed that the soul creates a world; from the height of its feelings it is able to bid defiance to lowly vicissitudes. Therefore, let our soul be a source of light and heat; for there is more of God in our soul than in the whole material world!

"BE NOT SOLICITOUS"

"*Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. . . . Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap. . . . Consider the lilies of the field . . . they labour not, neither do they spin.*" (*Matt.* vi. 25.)

(*a*) To work, this is the first Gospel the Creator preached. This is the way of our greatness and masterliness, it is the correction of our mistakes, the dispersion of our doubts. Christ does not oppose this, but condemns that feverish, selfish, egoistical cruelty with which man pushes on and ruins others; condemns that anxious thrusting, over-excited economic fight; that senseless desire for riches which wants more and more, and by so doing picks to pieces the beauty of one's own soul and the harmony of the world. Why increase pretensions and claims in food and clothing? Is there a more beautiful life than simple, blossoming nature, full of song? If we live in a grand style and snatch everything away from others, a world crisis must result. This chase after riches is not according to the Gospel, but to work and be spiritual.

(*b*) The Lord demands this chiefly of His Apostles. They should be able to live on crumbs! What becomes of the Gospel if the Apostles earn money? The simple life and unpretentiousness is the "*pondus Evangelii*," the moral seriousness. There will always be men who will give up everything for the Gospel. Just as the warrior when he hears the trumpet, tears himself from the fond embrace of his wife and child and leaves his house and home, so souls, apostolically inspired, are able to renounce all and start without scrip and staff into the world. This is the will of Christ!

(*c*) "*But I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.*" With delight the Lord Jesus looks upon the divine pomp in which the flowers of the meadows are clothed. He loves, enjoys, and praises beauty; He possesses the soul which makes Him see it divine. "Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast in the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!"

So God clothes us more beautifully; He gives us beautiful nature, divine traits in grace and shapes, and forms us with the fine touch of grace and mercy. He weaves sublime feelings into our soul; why do we not trust His loving art? Do our surroundings and the many different failures frighten us? Oh, yes, the beautiful can be spoiled and beauty made void, but this should not disturb us; in spite of dry stalk and leaf the flowers of the meadow open in the sunshine! Let us carry our treasure, which is God, in our heart and experience His grace; we will have dew, blossom, oil, scent, upon our soul; but we will also guard this flower and cherish it more than Solomon and all the pomp of history, for behold, we are more than these!

(*d*) "*Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap.*" Behold the soaring bird, the favoured one of nature dressed in festive garb; it makes use of earth and existence to be able to rise and soar. To rise . . . to become filled with grace . . . to pray. But soaring and flight demand much energy. What a magnificent sight the eagle is, swimming in the heights of the sky! What is it therefore we need? (1) We have to emancipate the soul by the glowing love of the spiritual. To love, so that we should not be depressed even if worries torment us. (2) To educate ourselves and others so that we should have but small needs. This is how Jesus educated His Apostles and yet He asked them: Have ye suffered need in anything? Ye have not, have ye? (3) We need great trust and reassurance in God; we must frequently rejoice in the words of the Psalm: "Who lives in the help of the Sublime, remains in the protection of the God of Heaven."

THE COMMAND TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES

"*Pray for them that calumniate you. And to him that striketh thee on the one cheek, offer also the other. . . . And if you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also love those that love them.*" (*Luke* vi. 28.)

(*a*) In the physical world there are sources of strength; let there be also in the moral one; such a source of strength is the will, which wishes the good and the noble, which endeavours to achieve an aim, creates order and balance, vanquishes obstacles and smooths differences away, in a word a spring of strength, light and heat, a healing spring. We should carry about with us this tranquillising order and balance and creative force. Let us leave ourselves behind and practise good; let us love, raise, and inspire. If ye love only those who love you, ye are not men of morality, but are merely subject to the law of action and reaction; this is what sinners, non-spiritual men, also do; ye shall love where ye are not loved; then will ye become suns, healing springs, healing herbs; this is when ye give something from out of yourselves. Behold, what nobility: to give and do something that is not barely reaction and mechanism.

(*b*) "*And if you do good to them who do good to you, what thanks are to you?*" Then ye are mere material, weight, quantity; there is no soul in you. Therefore we have not barely to react, but to be souls, that is to take the initiative. To do such to those who are repugnant, so as to lift them; let us seek them and win them. Let us want to be of use to others to-day with all our heart; let us want to do them some service and find pleasure in it.

(*c*) "*Judge not: and you shall not be judged. Condemn not: and you shall not be condemned. Forgive: and you shall be forgiven.*" This command should be obeyed from the point of view of positive spiritual strength and creative goodwill. It is not the advice of foolish simplicity, which says "Amen" to everything. We see the faults of others, but do not make them a stumbling block for ourselves; their clumsiness and offence should not be a dead-weight upon our soul from which our inner world becomes rough and obstinate. Oh no, we are filled with positive electricity, we rise and are capable of enduring man and of promoting his good. Otherwise we should have to suffer for our own unwilling, pessimistic and therefore suffering soul. Give us liberty, O Lord, from inner deformations.

(*d*) "*Give: and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom.*" He whose soul is active and energetic and is educated for positive effects, he who does not only wish to suffer, groan, and complain in the world, but wishes to be sunshine and forest, brook, meadow, and healing wayside grass, he is the one to whom shall be given good and overflowing measure of life, cordiality, consolation, and joy.

THE BLIND CANNOT LEAD THE BLIND

"*And he spoke also to them a similitude: Can the blind lead the blind? Do they not both fall into the ditch?*" (*Luke* vi. 39.)

(*a*) The blind are those who do not believe and hope, who have no sunshine, those who cannot lead, educate and raise. Likewise those who are dazzled by their immediate surroundings and are prevented by custom, tradition, and human considerations from looking into infinity—these, too, cannot lead. Just as those who are bewitched by the lovely body and beautiful earth, and who overcloud and cover the inner light by these things and forget the soul, these, too, cannot lead. They shall lead who see, who do not look into a fog, who are free, who are spirit and life; not the pessimist, the Pharisee, not the epicure, but "one is your master," the seeing, glorious Son-of-God, and if we also wish to lead, we have to become like Him.

(*b*) "*The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfect, if he be as his master.*" If you choose lowly masters and take their actions for standards, then in the tracks of bunglers you will be awkward and clumsy. If we are to mould life and soul, then let us take the most Sublime for example; that is why God became man. Jesus is not a Jew-type, not a classic, not of the first century; Jesus is eternal, "yesterday and to-day." The contemplating, thinking man somehow always rises from out of the time; the Saints all stand above their times and live eternal life. Therefore our master is not Kant, not Goethe, not Wagner, not Nietzsche; "*excelsior*" is our motto. The soul needs an infinite horizon; Christ gives this.

(*c*) "*And why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye: but the beam that is in thine own eye thou considerest not?*" Behold the picture of the instinctive man who is made for outward show and is as yet unconscious of himself. Because of his instincts he attends to the exterior, and he has not yet got an emancipated consciousness which contemplates himself. He is not yet an individual that can view himself as an object; he does not see inwardly, only outwardly, therefore this is not real consciousness. He sees always others and the mote that is in others; he does not see himself, even when there are beams, that is great faults, in his soul. What pitiful clowns and, if they mean it seriously, what clumsy hair-splitters. Jesus sees the crippled soul-world, these dwarf-people, and wakens them; He wants to raise these shrivelled figures and to smoothe the creased, wrinkled souls. We do not seek to be hair-splitting, petty judges, but beautiful, noble, upright souls and to influence others with the weight of our own worth and virtue.

THE NARROW GATE AND THE BROAD WAY

"*Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction: and many there are who go in thereat.*" (*Matt.* vii. 13.)

(*a*) There are many who walk the broad way; they are those who do not discipline themselves and who follow instinctive nature. For this no strength, struggle, or endeavour is needed. Who wishes to be unclean, untidy, lazy, unwilling, unfriendly, sour, bitter, malignant, has only to let himself go . . . broad is the way. He who follows his instincts and dulls his conscience, who does not control his coarseness, also walks the broad way. What a beast-track this is! The tracks of the Lord Jesus are not to be found here; neither does smiling beauty walk these ways; the way leads among swamps and burnt walls of rock, by the wayside there is nowhere a flower, nowhere a cross. In our mind we see and hear, as if the devil were driving herds of chained men in front of him; prisoners walk the broad way. What a disgusting, loathsome way it is; dark and muddy, it leads to the grave and to hell.

(*b*) "*How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!*" This is what is written upon the signpost: I am the way. This way is narrow, but magnificent; it mounts continually, and if we start upon it sunshine and fresh breeze is found there; its borders are full of healing herbs; pine forests, dewy flowers, and springs are by the wayside. One cannot walk upon it with a quantity of baggage and comforts, but if we free ourselves of these, it is easy going. Sin does not walk upon this way, neither that dark, sad shadow of worries which does not know the Father. The sufferers, the sick, and those who are dying, are taken care of by God's glorious angels on this way. But how few find this sublime way! Why? Resolution and determination are needed if we are to make for "the mounts of God"; but if we have done so we are no more afraid, and the higher we mount the more our heart is filled with joy.

(*c*) "*Strive to enter by the narrow gate.*" (*Luke* xiii. 24.) In Greek it says: "ἀγωνίζεοδε"; struggle for this entrance as if in your death-agony. We have to keep ourselves strictly in hand. We must make every effort to compel ourselves to enter the narrow way, to keep strictly to the law, to force ourselves to discipline our passions and inclinations, to cultivate self-denial and readiness for sacrifice, "*corde magno et animo volenti*," with a willing soul. Let us ask ourselves if we are not lazy in the mornings when rising, or slow and slack in accomplishing our duties?

WARNING AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS

"*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" (*Matt.* vii. 15.)

(*a*) Many prophets walk amongst us. Let us beware lest externals mislead us; lest the sheep's clothing cover a wolf-like soul. There are some who wear the nimbus of art, philosophy, education, fame, and literary excellence; some ignore God with philosophical tranquillity; or laugh at believers with audacious bravado of language and dazzling ideas; others seek with great love of humanity the new type of success and happiness, and overflood the world with half-truths. There are some who while preaching dark resignation, offer the "real" Gospel to the world. Knowledge, art, refinement, elegance, nobility, position recommend them; but beware, who denies Christ tears your souls to pieces. They tear and pick to pieces—they want the world without God, Christ without miracles, Gospel without Church, Church without Pope, men without souls, souls without immortality . . . behold the vultures! How much refinement we find in society, and what indifference towards the Church and the Sacrament of the Altar. There we find much wit and attention to every branch of knowledge, but dark, shameful ignorance concerning faith and soul-life. Chivalry and nobility at every step, but an apparently diabolical hatred of faith and grace. There is little good and much evil; what we want is the wholly good.

(*b*) "*By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.*" We judge the doctrine by its fruit. The fruit of the true soul is a warm, shining consciousness, peace and confidence, joy and love, trust and courage towards all that is good. "God with me" and "God in me." The grace of Christ gives us the internal, beautiful world which externally also is strong, just, and self-sacrificing. Do not let us follow doctrines by which our eyes, meant for the infinite, become overclouded—or by which our strength becomes crippled in the dark and we feel no vocation to fight against every evil—or our disposition becomes soft and passive, or hard and cruel. And we have to judge our various tendencies likewise, for sometimes a worldly and reckless, or a sensual and dark, untrusting spirit gains the upper hand in our soul. We have to be strong, brave, trusting children of God; all that darkens and disturbs, and robs the peace of our soul we will strictly scrutinize.

(*c*) "*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire.*" We must cut out the evil root. With the same interest with which we clip the trees of our garden, we must break off the evil tendencies of the soul. It cannot be done by any axe and shears method, but our darkened, suffering, embittered, groping soul must be brought to see the spirit of the one real Prophet, the Spirit of Christ. Let us oppose glory, joy, sweet strength, and confidence to darkness, suffering, and depression. Brooding souls must be shown the joy of holiness. This we have to show in our own selves to our brothers who listen to strange prophets. In ourselves also we must cut out the evil roots; the sensual, hard, selfish, dark tendencies; we wish to be good trees; Christ has planted us; we wish to develop and flourish according to Him and bring forth fruit accordingly ; therefore we will not spare the bad, predominating nature in us.

WE MUST DO THE WILL OF OUR FATHER

" *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven.*" (*Matt.* vii. 21.)

(*a*) We love Jesus if we live in His grace. Grace is the "*semen Dei*," the germ of God ; divine life given as latent force. This force becomes released ; this germ germinates, and from the God-germ the supernatural man develops. This actual, supernatural store of strength is the treasure of Jesus in us, He gives it to us ; where this is lacking He has neither place nor home. These supernatural forces come to our consciousness in the inspirations of faith, in the strength of conviction, in the magnanimity of feeling, in attachments, longings, and devotion. The divine feeling full of grace comes from the grace of God. This is why Jesus lays so much stress on grace. What can we do therefore without grace ? How are we to develop if the germ of God, the strength of Jesus, is not in us ? Love of grace and horror of sin are the heart-beat of Jesus in us !

Let us not say that we comprehend Jesus, if there is no germ of God in us, if we do not value grace. The chief care of the deep, serious, Christian consciousness is that it should be in the state of sanctifying grace.

(*b*) We love Jesus if we develop the life of grace to conscious, sincere friendship. Jesus is our friend, and we not only do not tear ourselves away from Him, we do not even wish to sadden Him, so near He is to us. In our eyes, no one is more lovely than He, no one warmer, more glorious, and intimate; His personality possesses us and keeps us prisoner. Is it therefore a wonder that the world does not cool our ardour and lead us astray? Is it surprising that we do not forget Him, and that in this unity of the soul we do not purposely commit even venial sins? Such developed, intimate love walks in the way of humility, for it is a devoted, clinging, tender feeling. The lamb clings to the good shepherd, longing for his gentleness; it crouches beside him and expectantly waits for the touch and caress of his hand; it shows its gratitude by its happiness. How could it offend the good shepherd? Offend him? Why? This would be unhappiness, the violation of our most tender feelings! It does not wish to offend, but to love! *Diliges dominum Deum tuum!* With the feeling of this faithful friendship it is easy to accomplish our duties punctually, to be of goodwill, not to lie, to be lenient, prudent, and indulgent. Let us endeavour to form our whole life from morning till night according to Christ; to lift our family and business duties to a divine standard by way of our feelings, and to answer life's small demands with an ardent, lofty soul.

(*c*) Bishop, prophet, miracle-worker—anyone can be lost if he relies solely on the grace attaching to his vocation; everyone has to heighten and augment perfection and saintliness in himself. What a great trouble and scandal it is when the "chosen ones" are not holy; of no avail are the "Lord, Lord," upon their lips and the symbol of God upon their robes; the sublime Lord looks for divine value below the brilliant robes. It concerns us all, therefore, that we should not trust the enthusiasm of zeal, when we do not serve the Lord by our actions. Let us do the will of God and measure our perfection accordingly; in this way will we be accurate judges of ourselves. If we seek for perfection in tears, emotion, and sentimentality, and ignore deeds, that is pure self-delusion.

THE CENTURION OF CAPHARNAUM

"*And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him: I will come and heal him. And the centurion making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.*" (*Matt.* viii. 5.)

(*a*) The feeling of the presence of Sublimity penetrates the soul of the centurion; he feels that he stands before a supernatural power which creates, heals, enriches, and makes happy. Before this power he becomes so small; therefore he pays homage. It is a great happiness to be able to pay homage, that is, to recognize the Sublime. This is what we are meant for, to turn our soul towards this Sublimity, to seek its traces and to recognize it with reverence. Our soul feels God as our eyes feel sunshine. In many ways this soul of ours becomes coarse and dumb; let us awaken it and render it nobler. Let it realize that every form of existence is a revelation of God, and that God is manifested in Nature, in the flowers and in the sunset. All this is a veil from under which beauty and spirituality peep forth. We are indeed His relations, for we feel, recognize, and embrace him. In us the Lord is present, He hides Himself in the foliage of our ideas and feelings, as formerly in the shades of Paradise, and we call the Lord: My God where are Thou? Thou art near to me, art Thou not? Thou art in me!

(*b*) I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter, but if Thou deignest to enter, my heart is filled with homage, joy and happiness. Jesus enters willingly. God is poured into our soul, as the sunshine into the forest; He wishes to enter every heart. This is what the Scripture indicates: Behold I stand at the door and knock. He came. He was not called for; He came as a beggar who begs for bread; as a lover asking for a loving heart; as a servant wishing to serve; as a child sitting at the doorstep of the parental house; or as a wanderer. No, no, He is the great Lord, who walks in disguise; who came to strengthen, heal, and render souls happy. He does not come burgling, but asking for admittance; if we wish it, He enters. God does not force us; He does not thrust Himself and His graces upon us; but let us realize that He longs for us, knocks at the door of our heart; He waits and stands before our gate. And He perseveres and does not depart! Oh, what sweet, strong love!

(*c*) To realize this must mean the opening of door, gate, and window. In opening door and window we are to have humble faith, warm longing and fine sense. The noble soul cultivates the nearness of God, His presence, and union with Him; it wishes to be divine in feeling, and in the acquiescence in His holy will; it applies itself seriously to making an abode for the Lord, and preparing a lovely home in itself. Therefore it begins by bringing its inner soul world into order. The more man is diligent in this, the more he feels that God is with him. And whatever happens—whether he mingles with other men, or his hands become rough from labour—the divine intuition, the sweet secrecy of love will not forsake him. Let us faithfully make use of God's graces, and we will find that God willingly makes His abode in us.

HEALING OF A LEPER

"*And when he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And behold! a leper came and adored him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*" (*Matt.* viii. 1.)

(*a*) Before Jesus stands the symbol of sin, the leper, with that dreadful malady, that living death that sucks out the vital fluid from the body of the sick one, eats away his joy of life, and renders him horrible and loathsome. Facing this stands the "*speciosus inter filios hominum*," the loveliest of men. Strong, beautiful, sublime is the Lord, but He does not disdain the wretched one, He is compassionate towards him; He sees misery and is merciful; world-sorrow does not descend upon His soul, but strength of action with which He gives life and beauty. This is Christ! One must needs be an iconoclast like Nietzsche, to regard this sublime figure of Christ as a slave-type.

(*b*) "*And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him.*" He has touches with which He purifies and shapes; each touch of His is grace. He shapes His image in us. Sometimes He touches us in such a way that our heart becomes contracted, at other times He makes our heart quicken, at times He raises, at others humiliates. These are the works of God's hands and arms. He fears not the leper, His hand will not be harmed. We also live in hospital;

we breathe the air of plague; unbelief, irresolution, cowardice, selfishness, and cruelty surround us. We also are in contact with sin; we have to deal with sinful, distorted souls. The hand of Jesus is wanted for this, a pure hand; a strong spirit is wanted, which abhors sin. We have to descend from the heights of pure, noble feelings, or rather we have to remain in that pure region and bend down to raise and heal. Only those help in this world who bend down to it from the height, so as to raise it.

(*c*) "*I will. Be thou made clean.*" This is the absolute, imposing will; to that there is no obstacle, no hindrance. This will creates and heals. This is miraculous. In the physical world He gives orders with this lordly, divine will; but in the moral world God stops with respect at the threshold of free-will and demands: Dost thou wish to become cleansed in thy soul, to become better, to resemble Divinity? If thou willest, then I also will it. Thou art sovereign, but thou art subject to one law; thou hast to will.

(*d*) "*And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him: See thou tell no man.*" Jesus teaches us selflessness and pure, clean intentions. Let us work for God, not for fame. Do not let us lead men to ourselves, but to God. As soon as we seek our own interests, grace forsakes us. For we have secret interests and personal vanities. The clear, pure intention is a great perfection, therefore do not let us presume too soon that our intentions are pure. Those who are soon "clear" with themselves, have no idea about the depths of the soul out of which our feelings, moods, and inclinations arise. Discipline and purification must touch these depths.

(*e*) "*But go, shew thyself to the priest and offer the gift which Moses commanded.*" Jesus does not injure the framework of positive religion and does not place us in the realm of subjective thought. He keeps in view the just demands of authority and wishes that we should respect them. Jesus did not reject religious forms, but He did not wish soulless, empty forms. We also respect the law, and keep to the rules; but we fill them with spiritual content and cherish the freedom of the soul.

JESUS RAISES THE YOUNG MAN OF NAIM

"*And it came to pass afterwards, that he went into a city that is called Naim . . . and when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother: and she was a widow . . .*" (*Luke* vii. 11.)

(*a*) "Naim" means "pleasant." What a contrast between the name of the town and this sad procession! The world and life are each a "Naim," we have pleasant places in it but there are also sad processions; we meet not only brides but sorrowful widows also. By the light of faith we see even sadder sights; we meet dead souls whose grave is eternal damnation. We must not allow these shadows to darken our spiritual life; we must not lose spiritual confidence and strength. Disuniting forces must not be permitted to tear asunder the symmetry of our soul. Our centre is God; we trust Him and know that He is good; we also know that our soul is a source of light, a burning lamp. We too believe the words of Dostoievski, who wrote from his prison in Siberia: "Here too one can live an ideal life." All and everything is good for us that is good for Thee, O Lord; nothing is too late, nothing too early. The youth who died early can die in an ideal way, and his widowed mother can likewise live ideally even in her veil of mourning, if she lives in Thee and from Thee, my Lord.

(*b*) "*Being moved with mercy towards her, he said to her: Weep not.*" We have to feel the suffering and pain of souls, then mercy and deep compassion will awake in us also. We do not feel and experience the misery of souls, we do not weep for our brothers, though their soul be dead and is being carried to the grave. . . . St. Peter walked among us with such deep compassion and animated us to have mercy and assume the feelings of Jesus. Weep for thy brothers, pray for them, draw them on gently, and lead them to the Lord. Let us say with Esdra: "I sat down weeping and complaining, many days I fasted and prayed; I beseech Thee, Lord, hearken to the prayer of thy servant with which I have prayed to-day for the sins of thy servants with which they sinned against thee. . . ."

(*c*) "*And he came near and touched the bier.*" We have to go to the dead, we have to take part in the world's commotion. We must not follow in the footsteps of Cain, who did not want to be the keeper of his brother, but in those of Paul, who preached to the "world." We never approach the Lord Jesus so much as when we throw the sun-rays of faith into darkened souls. Let great love inspire us towards mankind, great faith in the natural goodness of the soul, energy and manliness, and let us always endeavour to raise humanity.

(*d*) "*And he that was dead sat up and began to speak.*" His bandages fell off, his eyes opened, the soul of life pervaded him and breathed upon his face the warmth of love and joy; he who was a corpse sat up and showed that he lived. We also live . . . live in spite of coffins, funerals, and graves; we live and do not decay! The youth looked around him; how much love and gratitude there was in his glance towards Jesus! He had experienced the terrible struggle between life and death; on the brink of death the sun of life had shone in his eyes: *lux orta est illi.* He saw Christ, as no one of those who surrounded them. Oh, how he watched this "*dominus*," how fresh, strong and divine the Lord of life and death was to his eyes! *Vita, dulcedo, vis et fortitudo!* Strong was this Lord, by His strength the youth now lives and sits up; death is weak compared to this strength, and the encouraging glance of the Lord penetrates into his soul; it says: Live! Why shouldst thou die? Be not afraid, it is I!

(*e*) This is how we often are. Our mind languishes; darkness and death surround us. The more we "learn," the darker our world becomes, for we do not find a way out. The way out is the strong life which streams into us from God; from the field of "great deeds" where Christ beckons to us!

(*f*) "*And began to speak.*" "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will sing Thy glory." The lips of one who is awakened by Jesus open to glory, worship, and confession of faith. And how sweetly prayer flowed from this frozen heart, from these awakening lips, as perfume from the blossoming flowers. What was said by the dumb lips was death, bitterness, anxiety; what these opened lips say is joy and song. How many there are who are not capable of speaking, for they are dark, dumb, and bitter. Oh, if the Lord would only open these lips! From a bitter heart cruel words flow, but from a loving soul, sweet song.

(*g*) "*And he gave him to his mother.*" To her who bore and fed him, but could not save him from death; for this motherly love does not suffice; it would need divine strength. Now Jesus returns the raised youth to his mother, who took him in the same way as of old, for she bore him with pain then, and now also she received him with pain, that he might all the more belong to her and that she might rejoice all the more. What a thankful glance she must have cast upon the Lord. "Oh, great Lord, sweet Lord," she must have said, "Thou who giveth life in death; thanks be to Thee!" Divine strength awakens and gives back souls to the Church. The good mother, the Church, knows this well and is thankful to the apostolic souls who help to awaken her dead ones to life. "*Nunc in isto cognovi, quoniam vir Dei es tu.*" This is how she recognizes the apostolic soul in her sons. (3 *Kings* xvii. 24.) Let us work so as to give the Mother-Church joy. She bore us; let not her heart be embittered by so many dead souls.

JOHN SENDS TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES TO JESUS

"*Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?*" (*Matt.* ii. 2, 3.)

(*a*) St. John sends his disciples to Jesus, that they should believe in Him and not be averse to Him. For himself he asks no deliverance. He serves Christ in his fetters and carries the weight of the kingdom of God upon his soul. Full of conviction, he endeavours to fulfil his task to the end. Let everyone do the will of God in the position and state where the strife of life has placed him and let him not expect miracles, even if he forfeit his head. To us God also may send bitter experiences whilst to others perhaps a better lot falls. No matter. We go our ways and say: Thy will be done, and be Thou glorified in me!

(*b*) St. John sends his disciples to Christ. Every master has to send his disciples to Christ. We also strive towards Him and send others to Him. Inasmuch as His spirit is in me, I will be a light to others. To us the teaching of Jesus is absolute law; as soon as we take part in accomplishing it, we immediately feel that strength pours into us and by this strength we are the successful teachers of others. We long for as much as possible of the spirit of Jesus, so that in this way we can also do good to others.

(*c*) "*Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?*" Those who have not viewed Christ in the light of eternal life and saving love, continually ask: Art thou He, art Thou He, whom we expect? They do not seize the divine in its most beautiful and best form, but fall weakly under their doubts. We have already questioned sufficiently, and all say that it is He whom we await. Therefore let us wait no longer, but experience Him. We also say: Thou art He whom we expect, Thou "the loveliest amongst the sons of men." What else could we want? Now let us live and act according to Him.

ANSWER OF JESUS TO JOHN'S DISCIPLES

"*And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" (*Matt.* ii. 4, 5.)

(*a*) The Lord Jesus proves Himself by actions; as if He would say: I heal people, I do good for them, for I love them; I brought good and with it persecute evil, which strangles life; but my mission is not to heal the blind, the deaf, and lame. I am no doctor; with these miracles I only prove that God sent me, so that I might lead the people in the way of God. Not in healing, but in the faith placed in Me, is the real good, says Jesus, and by this faith it is that heaven comes to ye all. Ye have not to learn from me to heal the blind and the deaf, but ye have to learn to enclose the kingdom of God in your hearts. All this is for the comfort of your souls, which comfort ye find in Me. Be therefore attached to Me with the gratitude of the healed soul and with the freshness and strength of the healthy.

(*b*) Jesus is the great Benefactor; He Himself is the greatest good, and His actions are the outpourings of His bountiful heart. His doctrine is goodness. It makes barbarism cease and renders men nobler. He lifts marriage to the height of divine union and makes the bond of hearts unbreakable. He educates the children of God in the school, and inspires men to honour ideal motives. He keeps men to the accomplishment of the duties of their position and crowns all this with the blessing of holy love. Oh, how good all this is! We have to have great trust in the doctrines of the Lord Jesus, and to endeavour that we, as well as others, should have for all our actions the supernatural motives of the Gospel.

(*c*) What a great good is the example of Christ, this incarnate Gospel, in which depth, sublimity, necessity, longing, and suffering is all shaped in one sweet life, and comes towards us and looks into our eyes and says:

Brother, here I am, be thou also like Me; then thou wilt also do wonders. It is a beggarly behaviour to say great things and live small ones. "*Magna vivere, non magna dicere christianum est.*" Christ-like feeling and action are great life indeed. Let us read and meditate upon the Gospel; let us go to the Sacraments. In our worthily partaking of the Sacraments, light is poured into darkened souls, and a sense for the fineness of spiritual life will be awakened. Let us avoid every wilful sin; let us cleanse our intentions and let us endeavour to start all our actions from as conscious and as noble motives as possible.

JESUS PRAISES JOHN THE BAPTIST. I

"*And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: What went ye out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? . . . A man clothed in soft garments? . . . But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet.*" (*Matt.* xi. 7, 8, 9.)

We read of this sublime praise with great emotion. The heart of Jesus burns with fire when it sees such a glorious soul, it loves and honours it with the heat of its enthusiasm. See the one who praises, and what a praise! The man of the wilderness is no weed but an oak, and the pomp of kings is pale beside the dignity of his soul. This oak, this man, is more than a king even if he wears a girdle of camel-hair!

(*a*) Oak, not weed! The world, human considerations, fashion, moods—these swaying reeds whisper not in his soul; in him reign principles, character, consistency, and force of will. His faith, disposition, ardour, and actions do not change according to impressions. He seems hard and cruel, but this hardness and cruelty is the consistency of his principles, and the sweet and sublime character of his soul. Principles are cruel in so far as they must have their way in everything ; they are sublime and at the same time they penetrate into the smallest details of life and feelings ; they urge the right, that is they exact that life should be worked out to its smallest particulars with unity and harmony. These principles are like the sunshine which shines from the heavens down to us, but then weaves itself into every leaf and blade of grass, and burns into the gleaming back of the lizard. Oh, do not let us spare the capriciousness of our changing, wavering temper, the tyranny of our moods, and the heaviness of our soul lost in clouds and apathy. This is what makes our inner world become ugly, inconsistent, and unreliable ; let us strive upwards to the sunshine, to lofty aims and principles ; up to the consciousness of the value of our souls, and to God who surrounds us, reveals Himself in us, up to the sublimity of the Gospel and the faith of the Eucharist ! Down below, the reed-bed of the heart's feelings waves ; we know that the reeds are not forests of oak, and whilst they are reeds they will sway to and fro, but we will not sway to and fro with them, we will form our soul and character according to resolute principles. Even if we have no mood for it, we will and act ; even if we have no sweet ardour, we do homage ; even if our soul becomes darkened, we keep on in the direction we have set ourselves. In such souls principles develop to such a power that they also touch the feelings, and principles, feelings, and will co-operate uniformly. Of such a soul the words of Scripture truly say : " The Lord called thy name, a plentiful olive tree, fair, fruitful and beautiful." (*Jer*. xi. 16.) "I will make Him a pillar in the temple of my God"; "because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation." (*Apo*. iii. 12, 10.)

(*b*) St. John the Baptist is an independent, mighty soul. Kingly palaces, soft, lace garments, carpets and sofas do not impress him. Nay, more, he has an aversion for them; he sees few souls in that soft life. In the roughness of his camel-hair garb he depicts the soul's struggle for liberty. This is the garb of his king; it is the smock of the strong labourer working in the vineyard of the Lord. Do penance; let the soul expand in thee, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence! Let us raise our soul by penance and self-denial. In self-denial let us insist on the spirit taking the flesh! Let us do everything for our personality that makes it more beautiful and stronger. *Pro libertate!* Let us find pleasure in the discipline of our eyes, our imaginations, and our instincts! Oh, let our eyes open, that we may see, see in the noble, sinless, pure conscience our God, our treasure, our all. Let us work upon it so that this conscience should be a purified, crystallized, deep, shining, magical lake, surrounded by blossoming shores, mystical forests, and mountains of eternity in which heaven should not only be mirrored but submerged! In the beauty of the believing and loving soul and in its strength, the nearness of God becomes manifest.

(*c*) Such a soul is necessarily filled with God, inspired by Him; it is the soul of a prophet. The heights of eternity are his home, and when he descends from there, one can feel that he belongs to the heights, that he is the angel of God. "This is he, of whom it is written: "Behold, I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." (*Luke* vii. 27.) The grace of God accompanies him and he renders innumerable souls happy. God walks in his footsteps and he becomes the precursor of Christ, "he prepares the way of the Lord." He encourages, teaches, and raises men, so that they should approach God; his whole personality, ardour, and spirit are enrolled in this great service that in our consciousness there may be more of God, that is, more of the ideas of God, more of His light, more of trust, of the strength of life, of beauty of the soul, more of the agility of the soul and more of youth; so that we may rejoice more and more deeply, rest more securely, be more directly in contact with God, and come upon Him in ourselves. Souls, these are the touches of God—our sweetest joys.

JESUS PRAISES JOHN THE BAPTIST. II

"*But what went you out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.*" (*Matt.* xi. 9.)

(*a*) The prophet is like the mountain, he is a prominent man; the man of great ideas and enthusiasm. On him rests the sunshine of the thoughts of God; he directs the clouds of the spiritual world and makes the blessings of heaven incline earthwards. Streams break forth from it . . . he breathes cool, forest air. How does the prophet become a prophet? Isaiah has written of it in his fourth and fifth chapters. He has to become purified; the word and grace of God burn him, and the soul of God fills him with courage. We also will become purified, we will be brave, we will walk in prophet-like tracks. . . . And if the doubting, small-hearted world around us suffers, then we say: This is how apostates from God, depth, and ardour fare. All the more we wish to attach ourselves to Thee, that we may become prophets, that is, men of God. O Lord, our sweet treasure, speak to us, we beg Thee speak to us.

(*b*) St. John is greater than a prophet, for he is "the messenger of God." He lives for His cause and is not led by self-interest; he is a true servant in all, he who puts his whole life into this service; he has wings, that is, he possesses an aptness of soul for accomplishing the will of his Lord. This is how we have to experience spiritual values. We have strength, God gives it, and we do not doubt it for a second. The most beautiful thing on earth is the purified soul with confidence in God; this beauty and harmony we have to enjoy. This feeling is necessary and it not only does not make us vain, but on the contrary it confirms us in virtue.

(*c*) Finally, St. John is the man of God, who loves greatly, and by his great love he takes no notice of the non-loving world, but pours out the warmth of his soul, and turns others also on to these ways. He brings the grace of dawn to generations; of many such fiery souls we are able to say: "Who is it that comes towards us, as the dawn?" St. Francis of Assisi, St. Elizabeth, are like the dawn! A wonderful, new spring made its way into Italy in the tracks of St. Francis; the forest and meadow became beautiful; the grove was filled with the twittering of birds; sunshine and flowers turn men to song. Why was all this? Because they saw the world differently;

they saw it in another light; they saw it through the exhalation of love . . . the soul of the prophet awakens souls, it opens the eyes of the soul, of the mind; he teaches souls to sing. Oh, beautiful, sweet soul; why shouldst thou be strange to us? Does not the flower blossom in spite of the soot of our factories? Does not the lark sing although our machines rattle? Why should only our heart forget its sweet depths? Men love and do not forget to live in spite of machines and factory chimneys.

MARY MAGDALEN

"*And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.*" (*Luke* vii. 37.)

(*a*) Many paid homage to Magdalen and maybe they knelt at her feet also, but her heart was not satisfied with this; for though formerly it thirsted for pleasures, now it seeks pure morality, peace; it seeks God. Magdalen was far from God when she was being adored and found pleasure in it; but now it is she who adores the Lord and therefore she feels how contemptible are the lusts of mankind. She saw in Jesus sublimity, strength, and beauty; Jesus looked at her and from this glance she awoke, she recovered and shuddered. Jesus spread His graces over her and in their light she was dirty, ugly, and loathsome, but this same grace drew her on and induced her to humble herself, and taught her to weep. Oh, pure, sublime soul of Jesus, Thy glance is like the sun, Thy approach is like the breath of the forest, Thy person is like the height of eternity, enlighten, help, and lift up the low, sensual world.

(*b*) Magdalen does not even glance at the world; she does not care about anyone, but throws herself at the feet of her Lord. How she despises the world! Were she pure as a lily, she would be able to forget the world on account of the divine love which burns in her heart. How much more then, when she wishes to avenge this lost purity! Oh, it is sweet for her to forget and despise, sweet to weep and mourn! Though Magdalen walks the path of humility, her steps are decided; she weeps, but her soul is strong! Now it is that she really sacrifices her heart and does it for her passionate love, for she throws herself at the feet of Jesus, bathes His feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair, and she spurns and loathes the sinful world. This is the sweetest and holiest revenge, which revenges the soul and lost grace, and which makes satisfaction to God and itself. The longing for satisfaction should fire us. Oh, let us make up for the offences against God. Holy, just penitence is this.

(*c*) And what does Jesus do? Lovingly He looks at the zeal of Magdalen, and rejoices in her repentance. One after the other He reviews her merits and treats them with His divine favour. "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she has washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head." Such a humble, expiating spirit is what I need. "Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet." What I need is a friendly, intimate reception. "My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment," she showed how much she values me. "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." He who loves Jesus with a true heart and with enthusiasm and ardour will win everything from Him: forgiveness, grace, and courage.

JESUS INEXORABLE IN THE FULFILMENT OF HIS MISSION

"*And his mother and his brethren came, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him. And they say to him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And answering them, he said: Who is my mother and my brethren?*" (*Mark* iii. 31.)

(*a*) Jesus preaches, the force of his soul streams from Him, so that He might satisfy the hunger of His brothers. Then He was disturbed, for His mother and His relations wait outside; they came to fetch Him and wished Him to go with them. Jesus is hard; in His vocation He recognizes neither mother nor brothers who would stand in His way. These love Him, He knows that well; but another, higher, commanding love beckons to Him; the spirit opposes flesh and blood, and the spirit has to conquer. There are circumstances when our leniency and exaggerated regard is a sin against the Holy Ghost. On such occasions there must be no talk of persons, but of a principle which opposes God, and which brings us into temptation with the warmth of the flesh and blood. If the salvation of the soul is in peril, every bond has to be broken.

(*b*) "*And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things. . . . And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him. Who turning about and seeing his disciples, threatened Peter saying: Go behind me, Satan, because thou savourest not the things that are of God.*" (*Mark* viii. 31.) How sharply the Lord replies; He answers with the indignation of His soul. Jesus is decided, He wishes to offer His sacrifice; He wants to go to Jerusalem and to death. But the human feeling in Peter objects to this and he wishes to persuade the Lord to avoid the way of violence. "Get thee behind me," was the answer . . . for then the divine task would be lost and yielding to His enemies, He would not undergo the baptism of fire and blood. If He were to spare Himself all would be lost. In these hard words: "Get thee behind me," we again hear, "I am the Son of God." With us also opposition to evil and the fight with it is no harm, no misfortune, but a divine way and the task of virtue.

(*c*) "*He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it.*" (*Matt.* x. 39.) Those who gratify themselves and always act according to their pleasure, those who follow the inclinations of flesh and blood as a guiding principle, think that they have lived and satisfied their pleasure; but they are wrong; they have not really understood the real instinct of life; better than the world and the flesh have we to love the soul, and the soul's instinct of self-preservation has to be stronger than the love of the world, flesh and blood. Strong souls are those who assert the instinct of the self-preservation of the soul above the world and the flesh. The others are weak souls; the instinct of life is superficial in them; they build for themselves wretched shelters out of shifting sand. O Lord, let the instinct of strong life and the longing for the preservation of eternal life carry us away and emancipate us. Let this be our guiding star. According to this will we accommodate ourselves, take our measures, and bring our sacrifices!

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

"*Behold, the sower went out to sow. And whilst he sowed, some fell by the way side: and the birds of the air came and ate it up. And other some fell upon stony ground, where it had not much earth: and it shot up immediately, because it had no depth of earth. And when the sun was risen, it was scorched. . . . And some fell among thorns: and the thorns grew up and choked it. . . . And some fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit that grew up and increased and yielded, one thirty, another some sixty, and another a hundred.*" (*Mark* iv. 3.)

(*a*) The sower sows; his seed is the word of God and the impressions of grace, the ideas and feelings of faith spring from it. From out of His hand the seed does not fail; His grace trembles upon the souls as in a quiet rain the drops upon the boughs; it shines and trembles as the threads of the cobweb in the autumn field. In the inner world everything is saturated with soul, as nature is saturated with spores and seeds; all germs of life; palms, grass, firs, grow from them; strength and weakness, or beauty and disease. It depends on the heavens, the heat, the capacity; it depends on the readiness, the freshness, the devotion. O my God, our soul is the earth and Thou art its sower; plough us, water us, harrow us; pass along us with Thy prayer-inspiring thoughts, with the sunshine of Thy grace, with the dew of Thy emotion, with the wind of Thy longing; give all this to us and say: soil, my sweet soil, thou wilt not deceive Me!

(*b*) "*Some fell by the way* . . ." The road is broken, but by wheel-tracks, not furrows. It is trodden by stupid soles, heels, hoofs; the world comes and goes upon it. There are also souls in which the many senseless, muddy ideas walk in and out, ideas on which various impressions are reflected. There are souls which are like the inns or gipsy tents by the wayside; there we seek in vain for abstraction, absorption, and contrition; there nothing takes root. The birds which peck the seeds of God are the rash, flighty, flitting ideas. The fitfulness of the sun, caprice, good or evil humour, peck away the seeds. We have to recollect ourselves and feel remorse if we wish the grace of God to bring fruit.

(*c*) "*And other some fell upon stony ground* . . ." "*They who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root.* . . ." This is when there is aptness for good, but no perseverance, no inner glow; when we are enthusiastic, but the enthusiasm has no fire. "*Humus*" is indeed for fertility and also "*humor.*" We have to take in the words and forces of God and annex them; we have to display an eager resistance against contrary influences. Let us find pleasure in the strong and persevering will!

(*d*) "*And he that received the seed among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word: and he becometh fruitless.*" (*Matt.* xiii. 22.) Oh, ye souls full of thorns, where riches and the worries of pleasure become disfigured, or where the exciting strife of life, bustling work and bitter poverty menace . . . the rich forget to struggle; enjoyment educates low, ignoble frames of mind; and bitter poverty benumbs the heart. All these are barriers to the perfect development of the soul. Do not give us riches, Lord, but guard us also from poverty; both are thorns which easily choke the blossoms and foliage of the soul.

(*e*) And what fell on good soil and sucked up the juice of the earth, and awakened in the heat of the heavens and opened its leaves and stretched its stalk and summoned energy, such a one brought forth fruit, thirty, sixty, a hundred-fold, according to the inner capability and external circumstances. And all of it was good. God expects fruit from us also; He gave much; we have to live in the knowledge that we would be worthless beings if we did not fructify His graces with all our strength. Let us look into our soul, could we do thirty, sixty, a hundred times as much as we do now? It is not here a question of multiplicity, but the spirit coming from faith, the noble feeling, ardour and love. Surely we are capable of increasing these!

PARABLE OF THE COCKLE

"*Another parable he proposed to them saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and over-sowed cockle among the wheat and went his way. . . . And when the blade was sprung up and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle.*" (*Matt.* xiii. 24.)

(*a*) God "sowed good seed in his field"; the souls are "His field"; He loves this field over which so many clouds and shadows, so many blessings and curses have passed. It is a wonderful soil with an unspeakable amount of energy in nature and grace. Such a field are we also; we are "the field of God"; our life is a holy ground if we view its destiny and its graces, therefore it shall also be fertile soil; here we have to live and die; here it is that we will be rich or poor; this, our soil, will be our garden of Eden or the desert of our exile. The field of God is our field, we work it, hoe it, weed it, guard and love it; with interest we watch its fruits, for is it not our field?

(*b*) "*But while men were asleep, his enemy came.*" Dreams generally occur at night and here they characterize the predominance of the bodily, sensual man; amidst dream-pictures and vain shadows the spirit becomes benumbed; it prattles, trifles, and dawdles, but is incapable of strong work, faithful endeavour, and confident strife. It does not guard its "field" and golden fruit. Others also who ought to be guarding the holy fields, such as parents, priests, tutors, teachers, may also sleep. The enemy sleeps not, he comes without being seen. We shiver when upon the holy soil of the soul we see the foot and hand prints of the enemy. The enemy also sows; words, impressions, examples, scandals, temptations, importunities, desires, attachments, customs, and inclinations are his cockle; and the chief trouble is that we are asleep and do not notice it; we do not resist, we make a compromise. What madness to mix cockle among wheat; to expose the soul to impressions which corrupt and weaken it! If we cannot avoid receiving such impressions, let us receive them awake, but not in torpor!

(*c*) "*And the servants said to him: Wilt thou then that we go and gather it up? And he said: No, lest perhaps gathering* *up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest . . .*" Cockle and wheat grow together; we feel it. We are sensual and obey with difficulty; we are not very capable of speaking and acting spiritually; our manners are proud, our soul is undisciplined. The worldly, sensual, haughty disposition grows amidst weeds. Let us kill these continually, but at the same time we must not tear out the good; do not let us become exasperated, and accuse ourselves unjustly. Energy and patience are needed. Applying this parable to the history of the Church and of humanity, we see the grandeur of the ideas and plans of God. Evil is also a factor; sweet and beautiful are the flowers of its cockle; but God does not crush and break; the wheat as well as the cockle will bring their own fruit and the Judgment will show which was wheat and which cockle and the former comes into the barn, for life, the latter into the fire. The mills of God grind slowly, but we endeavour to anticipate Him. He has time, we have not; "time is short."

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

"*The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed . . . which is the least indeed of all seeds: but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.*" (Matt. xiii. 31.)

(*a*) The Gospel and the grace of Christ are a straining energy, full of depth. Who looks at it from the outside does not see much; but he who experiences it finds a wonderful progress in himself and he rises out of the earth and the world. It does not depend on many words, but on their strength; and strength is spirit and soul.

Individuals experience this, and the great world also experiences it. Oh, Gospel, thou unpretentious, secret force, how we honour and love thee!

(*b*) What have we to do for the kingdom of God to develop in us? (1) We have to extend our faith to our mental and moral world and have to make it rule. We look with the eyes of Jesus and not with the senses of the world, customs, traditions and human views. The world is at times imperialistic, at others cosmopolitan—at one time it is hard and classical, at other times sentimental; our faith cannot vacillate according to fashion. If sometimes there is great opposition concerning a point, later it diminishes! We must believe absolutely! (2) Interest, endeavour, and exertion are necessary if we are to experience faith personally and subjectively. The same Christianity has to be experienced by us freshly and with actual originality. Narrow-mindedness and comfort, which prevent spiritual absorption, must not stand in our way. In all our affairs, in our business and social strife we continually come upon tasks which we have to solve according to the principles of faith. Let us do it; let us think and feel strongly, but according to faith. (3) Our spiritual, soul-world develops; because law, grace and divine will become justice, purity, patience, moderation in the spiritual world and assert themselves in the consciousness of strong, happy life. We drink these in as the forest drinks in the sunshine and the dew. Carlyle said of the time he acquired a deeper faith in God: "It was then that I became a man."

(*c*) "*The birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof.*" The Mother-Church is our nest; here we rest. Even if we fly about the world and look about for food, yet our heart returns; here it is at home. Each well-formed soul is a branch of the Church, and each one draws many other souls, so that we can say that on these branches the souls live and rest. What attractive power there is in St. Francis of Assisi, in St. Ignatius, in St. Vincent! More attractive and sweeter than any apologia is each beautiful, holy soul. Do not let us dispute much and criticize much, but let us live holily.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

"*The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.*" (*Matt.* xiii. 33.)

(*a*) The kingdom of heaven makes its entry and gains a footing in man; it is like leaven which makes the soul ferment, changes and forms it. The leaven changes the rawness of the flour and gives it flavour; the same fermentation purifies the new wine and changes its sweetness to strength and spirit. Such a penetrating and reshaping power is the Gospel, the grace of Christ, and the Eucharist. It breaks the wild strength and instinctive nature of the soul, and renders it enjoyable to God and to itself. It does this thoroughly; it picks the fibres of human feeling to pieces and penetrates into every particle. This is verily the strength of God, which penetrates soul as well as body, which ennobles our ideas, reaches right down to the smallest movements of our heart, and is felt in our speech, and rules our actions.

(*b*) The woman puts the leaven in three measures of meal; we also have to change three courses of our soul.

We carry the light and justice of Christ into our mind; we build up our soul-world upon correct philosophical and theological notions, and we see to it that we are occupied with only reasonable, true, and holy ideas. We exclude inconsistent, flashy, irrational thoughts. We carry the light and truth of Christ to the rich world of feelings, from which we cannot lock out the unconscious passions of our sensual nature, but there we sit at the threshold of our consciousness and ward off the street, the herd. . . . "*Limpidezza*," transparent intactness is what we long for. We carry the leaven of the Gospel into our will; we wish to be correct. We do not delude and deceive ourselves; our greatest longing is to wish what God wishes, even if we are not pleased with it. We are not advocates, but the sons of God; we do not misinterpret, but willingly pay homage.

(*c*) The fermentation spreads slowly in our souls. Apostolic Christianity was strong leaven, it spread quickly and brought about a magnificent transformation; in us the divine grace makes but slow progress. Maybe, there is much ailing substance, much of that other leaven about which the Lord said: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." We are full of lowly, sensual, selfish feeling; we are boasters and are fastidious and do not endeavour to avoid even the venial sins. "Purge out therefore the old leaven." (1 Cor. v. 7.) Let us avoid venial sins, and our souls will become fresh, and our love for God will continually grow.

PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

"*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field . . . again . . . it is like to a merchant seeking good* *pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had and bought it.*" (*Matt.* xiii. 44.)

(*a*) The precious pearl which we have to find is the value of our soul, which is greater than everything, it is peace, confidence, and happiness. God's eye is caught by this pearl; He loves it, "*sic dilexit*"; He values it greatly and tends it so "that a thread of thy hair does not fall to the ground." God sent His Son to search for it, and then in His footsteps He sent Apostles and Saints; and He gives up all for this treasure—His Son, His Blood, His Soul. Those who awake to the consciousness of this immortal value, similarly those who find peace and reassurance and mental balance in faith and love, those come upon "the kingdom of God" in themselves, and in this kingdom upon their own kingly dignity. They find precious pearls.

(*b*) The supernatural value is a precious pearl, which God places in our soul by His grace. Through grace we are like to God and after death it will be the divine life with its intensity and divinely beautifying love which will fill our consciousness. Here below we are "the seed of God," "*semen Dei*"; there beyond we will blossom forth. What life, what flowery spring, we carry in ourselves! O my soul, thou mysterious ploughing-field, in which the treasure of glorious eternity is hid; thou ocean depth with thy precious pearl, indeed we value and love thee! And the great inheritance of the children of God awaits us too, happy eternity; for naught will we give up this right, for we wish by all means to assert it.

(*c*) The precious pearl is the strength latent in us for shaping divine life here and now. Our divine life proceeds already here below, if we possess the knowledge that by the smallest action we honour and serve God. We do not merely fight an economic battle, a battle for food, but we work upon the cathedral of God which is being built in world-history. Whether we eat or drink we do everything for God ; therefore our life is rich and valuable. Mankind, though it is often in a low condition, is our fellow-brother ; we always wish to lift and raise these brothers of ours. Our marriage is not the physiological union of man and woman, but a Christ-like *mysterium*. Our happiness is " health and peace " ; we find pleasure in the sunshine and in the flowers of the field ; and if suffering comes to us we embrace it as though it were the Cross of Christ, and always trust !

(*d*) A precious pearl also is our awakening to the consciousness of Christ-like life. Christ is with us in the Gospel, in grace, and in the Eucharist. He lives with us and teaches us the most sublime life ; He lifts us above social troubles ; He does not identify Himself with the age and its institutions but stands above them. Liberty of the soul is what He teaches us, lest we go under in the waves of life. He teaches us to walk upon them with an emancipated soul. We do not compromise with the variableness of either past or present ; we look at the world with free spirit and soul and at the same time develop. " Have faith ; I have conquered the world." There are many views and theories, but the life pleasing to God is the Christ-like one.

(*e*) For this precious pearl we have to give up everything, that is, we willingly give up all, after we have found it and possess it. In the consciousness of our dignity strong is our faith and sweet our joy ! Why should we chase butterflies and trifle with vain things? Do we not willingly abandon everything for the kingdom of God we experience, and for the kingdom we expect? "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Or distress? . . . or persecution?" "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*Rom.* viii. 35.)

(*f*) Though our existence and consciousness is modest it contains treasure; the ocean of life is bitter, but although it is cruel it produces pearls. The treasure is buried; layers of dust, stone, rubble, sensual and beastly existence cover it; it has to be dug out. The pearl swims in the hardships of life, in the ocean . . . it has to be fished out. Times, customs, fashion, negligence, sin, decadence, and indiscipline make us forget the treasure and the pearl. The storms of disappointments, shipwrecks, and sufferings divert the attention; economical strife, work, workshops, worries about our daily bread change the earth to an arena of combat, no one supposes a treasure there. But Jesus says: It is there; we must not be put out by semblance, by everyday obscurity, by the earth; the treasure is in the depth; it is in you, says Jesus, if ye feel and live as I do.

LEAVE ALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST

"*And a certain scribe came and said to him: Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou shalt go. And Jesus saith to him: The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests: but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.*" (*Matt.* viii. 19.)

(*a*) The Scribe becomes enthusiastic, the greatness and sublimity of Jesus inspire him. The soul lives on beauty and righteousness, and where it meets such it pays absolute homage. The scholar and the artist also impress us, but it is above all the Saint who draws us on. But we may not rest content with the impression and the feelings they create; we have to act. The Scribe also became enthusiastic, but Jesus pointed out His hard life: I have no house, no comfort, I am the servant of others, is what He meant, and behold thenceforth the enthusiasm of the Scribe decreased and he did not force himself to action. We will not trust such feelings as do not help us to action; we will not trust zeal, ardour, and enthusiasm which do not follow the commands of God with action; without action the feelings are misty veils. What we wish for are actions, and life according to Jesus; the feelings are only means to this.

(*b*) "*And another of his disciples said to him: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him: Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.*" There are dead souls who do not feel according to God, who do not accept the Gospel of Jesus, who do not take part in our faith, our hope, and our feelings. It is amazing that even Jesus met such dead ones, who asserted the sovereignty of human liberty even against Him. It is a sad independence indeed to be dead. "Let the dead bury their dead." Philosophies, tendencies, theories, fall one after the other. One could well say of them: their principle is to bury, their vocation to die. We will take care not to be infected with the poison of corpses, with the doubt of the "dead," with their indifference, their slackness; our principle is to preserve and keep others alive and our vocation is to live eternally.

(*c*) "*And another said: I will follow thee, Lord; but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house. Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.*" (*Luke* ix. 61.) Who keeps looking back from beside the plough has not got his soul, his mind, there; his attention is elsewhere, therefore he does not work with the necessary energy and spirit, or he is fatigued and tired of it. For the kingdom of God also whole men are wanted, who give themselves up and put their whole soul into it and do not look elsewhere; perseverance also is wanted. The half-hearted never attain their ends; they are also inconsistent. We have to work continually, with our whole energy and perseverance upon ourselves and other souls. The stream immediately whirls away the boat as soon as it does not strive forward; we also have to be faithful every instant, we have to be persevering. Do not let us look back to see what and how much we have done already, but let us continually work and act. "What is behind me, that I forget," said St. Paul, "and what lies before me, to that I devote myself." And we must not look to see how much more work there is to do, but let us do here and now what we can. "My brothers," said St. Francis of Assisi, "let us begin to love God." Let us begin, begin continually. The psyche of beginners is joy, strength, and exertion; beginners do not look for the evening, that is what the tired ones look for, but their hands are itching for work. To do in small things here and now as much as possible, that is the secret of greatness.

THE TEMPEST AT SEA

"*And when he entered into the boat, his disciples followed him.*

And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves : but he was asleep." (*Matt.* viii. 23.)

(*a*) The Church is the ship of the ocean of time, it is the carrier of great treasures above abysses and storms. The greatest treasure of humanity is faith and education ; these two must not be torn apart. It is not allowed to say that the salvation of humanity is entrusted to another ship. There are many self-willed, audacious sailors ; many pirates ; but they neither serve the general good, nor the happiness of their own soul. We are on the flagship ; we are continually voyaging to new oceans with enterprising spirit and set sails. Our provisions do not run short ; the waters of life do not fail ; we cannot miss the direction.

(*b*) Jesus is on this ship ; He sleeps, that is His presence is mysterious ; but on the ship there are oarsmen, striving generations, who have to row with a will ; they have to watch every change of the wind. There are storms and they can only progress by struggling. God placed morals in a material nature and He placed the Church in history ; He did not even exclude schism from His plans. Let naught disturb us. Do not let us question : why does the Lord permit this or that ? The Lord is resting amongst us ; He gives us strength, faith, and trust. He suffered treachery and agony ; and we too go through storms. There is one thing we have strongly to believe : God is in our soul, Christ is in the Church.

(*c*) "*And they came to him and awaked him, saying : Lord, save us, we perish.*" To cry out is permitted, the cry voluntarily breaks from our heart ; but to doubt is not permitted. Let us cry out and pray, but do not let us doubt, and let us likewise cry out but let us also work. Such sound idealism is wanted in us. The Lord Jesus took the cry of the disciples willingly, He only reprehended the mistrust, the doubt: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." If we go about in storms, upon the ocean let us adore Jesus whose power commands the oceans.

JESUS HEALS TWO THAT WERE POSSESSED OF DEVILS

"*And when he was come on the other side of the water . . . there met him two that were possessed with devils, coming out of the sepulchres . . . and . . . they cried out, saying: What have we to do with thee, Jesus Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*" (*Matt.* viii. 28.)

(*a*) There are enraged, dark, raving spirits and they exert their influence on men. Hate spurs them on, and their passion is to ruin the masterpieces of God, primarily man; they defame, infect, and degrade him. What a terrible, cruel power this is! We do not wish to be in the same room with dead ones, neither with madmen nor poisonous snakes: are we to dwell with the devil? He hates us and calls the Holy Scripture "murderous"; he ruins life, soul, education, marriage. Let us therefore hate sin. We must not suffer the devil to dwell in our heart. Our heart must not be like ruins and cursed places. Those possessed of the devil were not clothed; the devil of impurity suffers no clothes. Naked pleasure stirs up its longings, that is what it feeds on. The forceful, disciplined soul puts up with the body, for when all is said and done the beauty of the flesh comes from the strength of the soul. We shall find the "*corpora plus quam humana*" where the "*animæ plus quam humanæ*" are being educated. Body and soul are what are wanted, not only body and body!

(*b*) "What have we to do with thee?" The Cain-like, cold words become a curse and rebellion on these lips! They have naught to do with the Redeemer and His divine heart! This is the judgment of inexpressible unhappiness! Would any one of us dare to utter this: What have we to do with Thee, Christ? Has not in such a one faith, hope and charity become darkened? Has not the mental balance become shaken already, deeply shaken? And what about our likeness to God in our daily life? Do we show that Christ leads us and that we obey Him? We will not break with Him in anything! This is our aim.

(*c*) Thou camest before the time! The sinner always maintains that grace comes to him before the time; the time for conversion has not yet come! This knowledge is a torture which torments, humiliates, and shames! Then the time passes, the "*irreparabile tempus*," and he views his poverty with unspeakable sadness, for "he will have no time left." Happy is the man who has not reached the time when it shall be too late, and who makes use of this time. With what ardour can such a one look into the future, with what composure can he view the present and with what joy and gratitude will he look upon the past! But whatever little time we have and however old we may be, let us hurry to live and make use of the time.

(*d*) "*And the devils besought him, saying: If thou cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine. And he said to them:*

Go." Behold the wish of the mighty, but darkened, spirit. He who does not look into the sun and who has naught to do with Christ proceeds slowly but surely along the downward path; the first step is doubt, the second scepticism, the last cynicism. In spite of finery, polished floors, and perfume. Education is not morality, says Leroy-Beaulieu; at every step we experience that the beast shows through the human being in spite of titles, dignities, lace, and furs. Who does not pay homage to God in his soul becomes the slave of his body; this is our moral creed!

(*e*) "*But they going out went into the swine: and behold the whole herd ran . . . into the sea.*" Two thousand swine ran into the abyss; they perished there. In many ways the world resembles this galloping herd; the instinct of fleshliness drives it on, it makes much noise, stirs up much dust, then the ignominious end overtakes it! Meanwhile the two healed men quietly sit at the feet of Jesus; their soul is freed and they give thanks to the Lord, and the owners of the swine complain about the loss. This is great loss indeed—two thousand swine for two souls! Jesus does not think it too much; He taught us that we have to suffer everything for the deliverance of the soul, and if He valued the souls highly why should we not value God highly, why should we not suffer losses for Him? Zeal often causes loss to itself or others for the sake of spiritual gains! The wisdom of the Gadarenes who wished to guard swine as well as souls is unreasonableness in the eyes of Christ.

(*f*) "*Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him. But Jesus sent him away, saying: Return to thy house and tell how great things*

God hath done thee." (*Luke* viii. 38.) "To be with Him," the source of strength, healing, and blossoming; to be with Him and to feel His protection, His refreshing, life-giving influence, and to enjoy it, this is what the healed soul needed, this is what every soul having come to its senses wants. This is what Magdalene won, "out of whom the Lord cast out seven devils"; this was the grace of St. Paul who was the persecutor and then the ardent follower of Christ. But Jesus sends the exhausted man home; go home and serve God, leave the ways of Apostleship to others. The Lord does not call everyone to Apostleship, but He calls the possessed one to pure, noble, Christ-like life. We can be full of zeal and ardour, we can be nameless saints of the Lord, and this suffices us.

JESUS RAISES THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

"*Behold a certain ruler came, and adored him, saying: My Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus rising up followed him, with his disciples.*" (*Matt.* ix. 18.)

(*a*) This is the etiquette of the court of God; those who go to Him kneel, adore and beg. Men also may be lords, but they are completely dependent on God. They are created lords, created by the mouth of God, by the upholding word. Men can only be lords by the breath of this word. If they haughtily lift up their head, they knock it against the beam of finiteness. The depth of life, the sublimity of power, and the mysteriousness of death incline man towards modesty. If we are contrite, then we comprehend the simple, noble forms of duty and morality and we are truly sorry for the violent "superman" and his unbelief and hollow-sounding words. God makes us become great and each time we approach Him with humility we become greater and greater.

(*b*) "*And adored him.*" The customary pictures of death change to touching power when they concern those we love. The feeling of our helplessness and pain becomes a cry—a cry from out of the depths. How modest the king mourning for his dead is, as is the queen feeding her infant; the power of life and death does not distinguish queen and king, it knows only yearning, longing souls, souls who pray. Oh, come, dear Lord, and place your hands upon them . . . that faith is still weak which requires the placing of the hands over it, but it already is honourable, for it prays. The weak soul living in temptation shall not be amazed at being weak; but it shall pray, it shall beg; in time it will be stronger.

(*c*) "*Some come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, Thy daughter is dead: why dost thou trouble the master any further? . . . Jesus . . . saith to the ruler of the synagogue: Fear not, only believe!*" (*Mark* v. 35.) Man quickly says: Enough; do not trouble the Master! But the Master goes towards the bier and the grave. Do not be afraid, only believe; she will live! But, of course, we are afraid! We are afraid of death; it hurts to tear ourselves away; it is terrible to slide down the unknown, roaring depth. How will we find our way home there? Let us have no fear, Jesus guides. To the water it is the same whether it flows by day or by night, the depth draws it on; we are drawn by God in death also; we go rightly and find our way if our heart is pure. Let us not be afraid, but believe and love! Our death will be a magic awakening from deep sleep!

(*d*) "*And they come to the house of the ruler . . . and he seeth a tumult, and people weeping and wailing much. And going in he saith to them: Why make you this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. . . . And taking the damsel by the hand, he saith to her: Talitha cumi. . . . And immediately the damsel rose up and walked.*" The mourners weep, sew garments, weave wreaths, and prepare for the funeral; their hearts are filled with despair. The divine Saviour steps among this downcast crowd as life and strength itself. He thinks differently and sees other things; He sees no dead, only one asleep. From death, from the threshold of eternal life He recalls the soul of the damsel; He beckons to her and she obeys. Worldly mourning, which does not care about the soul, is a vain show. We look at the dead with the eyes of Jesus; we arrange our cemetery for "the resurrection."

HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD. I

"*And a woman who was under an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing the better, but rather worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him, and touched his garment. For she said: If I shall touch but his garment, I shall be whole.*" (*Mark* v. 25.)

(*a*) The woman who had the issue of blood, loved life, sunshine, and flowers; she tried everything, but in vain; sweet life flowed away! We also love life, but we have to love the whole of it, the flowers as well as the depth, austere sublimity as well as beauty. Life is not pleasant and attractive, it contains also rain, fog, and storm; it is duty as well as joy; bravery, strength, and strife, but also simplicity, purity, humility, and intimacy. "Blue sky, red roses, white marble, and scented air" is only one side of existence! What about the rocks and abysses of the Alps? . . . What about the heights of duty, the depths of sacrifice? . . . We have place ourselves in complete harmony with the world; this we are only able to do with strength and discipline!

(*b*) There is much pain, illness, and trouble, and it is difficult to bring these bitternesses in accord with the conception of the good God. But do not let us blame the Lord; do not let us be indignant with the God of pain. Christ does not say that we are to suffer as much as possible, that virtue and perfection are to be found in suffering alone; but He includes pain in His programme; He sees that it is a problem which has to be solved; and teaches us how to solve it. In the land of death, Achilles thinks of the sunshiny, beautiful world and sighs that he would rather be a beggar on earth than king in Hades. The complaint is of no use, the lovely world passes away and we have to help the soul which does not pass away. We must learn how to suffer for God and the beauty of the soul.

(*c*) The woman recognized Jesus; she formed the right idea about Him. She might have formed a wrong one; she might have been sceptical. And if she had had no trouble, maybe she would not have cared about Christ. How much becomes woven into the views of men, how many unconscious and conscious, well-controlled and smuggled elements! We are to guard the customs-barrier and disinfect all that enters the soul; dirt, rags, poison, and daggers are forbidden. Yet how much enters the soul by way of bad example, conversation, and reading! Let us also take care of the different influences. We must beware of one-sidedness; temperance, justice, fairness, and humility are our safeguards. What conception has Nietzsche about Christ? Who inspired that? And what a misfortune it is to pass that on and poison souls! Who is responsible for this?

(*d*) The woman has a simple, childish trust: if she only touches his garment . . . The instinct of our soul is to approach, to touch, to come into contact. That is why God became man, that is why He came near us, that we might everywhere come near the edge of His garment. Nature is also His flowery, starry, gleaming edge, but it is chiefly in the Eucharist and in His Sacraments that we can touch the Lord! . . . How often does the Lord pass close by us, how often His garment touches us! How often do we feel Him near us and in us and clasp Him to us! Our little acts of attachment, such as visiting the Blessed Sacrament, short prayers, the use of holy water, promote our attachment to the Lord. We also touch the hem of His garment.

HEALING OF THE WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD. II

"*And forthwith the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the evil. And immediately Jesus knowing in himself the virtue that had proceeded from him, turning to the multitude, said: Who hath touched my garments? And his disciples said to him: Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou who hath touched me?*" (*Mark* v. 29.)

(*a*) The throng nearly crushes the Lord, but this is the touch of the body. There is also a touch of the soul. We touch each other with love, trust, reverence, or with hate and coldness; the warm hand and loving eye is a human touch. And we touch God with faith and trust. Magdalen touched Jesus not only with her hands but with her soul; Veronica also touched the Lord, so did the woman who had an issue of blood. The sunshine also touches the buds of flowers and the rain reaches the roots. . . . In Holy Communion we touch, taste, and enjoy Christ: "*mel et lac ex ore ejus accepi*," His kiss is like milk and honey to us.

(*b*) "*And he looked about to see her who had done this.*" No one, no one. Everyone draws back and is afraid; many have touched Him and now they are perhaps afraid of His wrath and make excuses and perhaps deny it. We are often thoughtlessly cowardly and false, and we also tell lies; we make excuses and screen ourselves. For our part we also have to educate ourselves to discipline concerning instinctive cowardice, and we always have to speak straightforwardly and openly. If we are questioned we even have to vent our subjective views and differing opinions sincerely. An open, straightforward frame of mind and disposition is beautiful indeed, because it is pure and strong.

(*c*) "*But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said to her: Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.*" There the good woman trembles; she is afraid, for she was bold and dared to touch the Son of God, she the impure one. What a dear, humble soul! Often Saints are afraid to approach Jesus, to commune with Him; they think too little of their merits, and find that their garments are shoddy. They feel their frailty! God delights in this. Let us also feel all this, but let us approach Him with trust in spite of our insufficiencies; God accepts us with love and assures us that faith is a healing force in us also.

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH

"*And he came to Nazareth where he was brought up: and he went into the synagogue according to his custom on the sabbath-day; and he rose up to read, and the book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto him. And as he unfolded the book, he found the place where it was written: The spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me, to preach the gospel to the poor he hath sent me, to heal the contrite of heart.*" (*Luke* iv. 16).

(*a*) The first appearance of Jesus, of the Messiah recorded in the Holy Scripture! He introduces Himself as anointed by the Holy Ghost and overflowing with grace. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." This is the great fact, that God incarnate came into the world, as a mountain of crystal, upon which the sun sparkles and out of which wells spring forth. This is how the preacher of the Gospel is to be . . . anointed with faith, hope, and grace; words shall be sweet upon his lips. The object of the Gospel shall be shown in him. To carry news of joy, to heal, to help . . . this is following in the steps of Christ. "And they wondered at the gracious words. . . ." These are Christ-like words; not to scold, but to raise and to warm.

(*b*) "*And they said: Is not this the son of Joseph?*" The son of the carpenter! Behold the human thought which is taken aback by blood, garment, and appearance, and overclouds the divine, the spiritual. Do not look to see if He is the Son of the carpenter, but whether Soul streams from Him. There was Soul in the bookbinder apprentice Faraday; and without soul, kingship and academy are worthless. Soul give us, dear Jesus, give soul to our earthly dwellings. Give us soul to hear the Gospel, and soul before the Sacrament of the Altar. Give soul to our daily life, and to public life. Then life will not be empty however it is spent.

(*c*) "*And he said: Amen I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.*" With reverence and humility has the Sublime to be approached. We are not allowed to dispute and quarrel with it. Thus it had already come to pass that Elias put up at the heathen widow's and that Eliseus healed the heathen Naaman and not the Jews. Those who open their hearts, to those I speak. We do not break open doors, we only knock; brother, let me in! Oh, my God, where has the word of God and His grace to take refuge from the sages of the world, where? With a widow of Sareppta. . . . What was more, man was arbitrary with God "and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill . . . that they might cast him down." On such occasions the prophet becomes dumb . . . and "passing through the midst of them went his way." O Lord, we open gate and door to Thee and accept Thee; down on our knees, we beg Thee to speak to us. We obey Thee, we will be Thy faithful servants.

PERSECUTION OF THE CHOSEN

"*But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils . . . and you shall be brought before governors, and before kings for my sake . . . but when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak.*" (*Matt.* x. 17.)

(*a*) Do not let us worry much. Let us do our best in what depends on us and not lament or fear the difficulties. It is not we that direct the world, but the Lord. And the Lord placed us here, so here we are to stand. Those who have faith in the Lord are like the mount of Zion; "and will never waver." The martyrs were also men and stood their ground. Trust is the furthering and development of our own strength with the aid of the strength of God. What we are capable of, that we give completely, God will add to it. St. Ignatius said that we are to trust as if God would do all, and act as if we would have to do all. St. Francis of Sales said: If I were to be born again, I would trust in God still more.

(*b*) "*For it shall be given you in that hour what to speak.*" When it is necessary, the Lord helps in that same hour! Now, maybe, we feel ourselves weak and think that in case of this or that temptation we would fall! This is not the right psychology and still worse theology. For now help is not wanted; if it will be wanted, then it will come and we shall feel differently. How many men became persevering, great, strong, and heroes in that same hour. We sometimes have to pass through queer hours and weak moments, but because of our own faults; because we do not discipline and educate ourselves and say: Here and now we can be heroes, we can be noble-minded, if we do not let ourselves go . . . let us begin the work and do not let us yield.

(*c*) "*For it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.*" He is the wise, inventive, brave, inspiring Spirit, and not ye, ye low-lying, capricious shadows; the Spirit is your consolation, your teacher, whom I send in My stead, who accuses and judges the world. The Spirit of your Father, who created you and does not abandon you; therefore He sustains with the Spirit and anoints "kings, prophets, priests and martyrs" with it. We adore the Holy Ghost, who inspires, warms, cools, and consoles us. With Christ the Man here and now, we cannot speak; but with His Holy Spirit we can indeed speak.

FEAR NOT THEM THAT KILL THE BODY

"*And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell.*" (*Matt.* x. 28.)

(*a*) There exist evil, illness, suffering, outrage, death; but all this is not the real evil; evil is damnation. Its abysmal depths are so great, its immense agonies so tremendous, that in face of them these chains, prison, and iron bars, and death melt away. The motives of infinity and eternity tremble in these words of Jesus; they are the basis of that Christian temperament which belittles every evil and by so doing gains victory over it. The infinite value of the soul and the weight of eternity gives that energy which conquers everything. It shows us SS. Lawrence, Agnes, Cæcilia. . . . Their tremendous strength consisted of their having no fear of flames, fetters, swords, suffering, and death! They belong to the generation of amazing heroes trained by Christ. He trains us also; we are to fear nothing but the infinite evil of sin.

(*b*) In this declaration of Jesus' we adore God's unbending, holy will. He puts before us the good and the evil and says: here am I, there is the evil. . . . The immense seriousness of life is that God loves us, honours and lifts us up, and He loves us forcefully; His love is no sugar-water, no effusiveness; His love is force, creation, and exertion; His love inspires heroic temperaments and nobility; He inspires us with magnanimous feelings, which enable us to conquer pain and death and to fear nothing. In nature also God has placed the continuity of strife, battle, and contest. Immense contrasts appear everywhere: life and death, sunshine and night, beauty and decay, and in all this He is the sovereign sublimity. Let us therefore correct our soft feelings and human ideas about God and His love. Our age is much too soft, therefore it errs; it gives up striving to assert its strength and denounces the only rightfulness of virtue. This is not in the least divine but flatly and tediously human. Let us take care not to be mistaken and not to err.

(*c*) "*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing: and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore . . .*" God takes care of us, but according to His conception. He has said and told us what we are to fear, what the real evil is and what counts as lesser evil. Illness, persecution, anguish, and shame may all be our portion; it was also that of the martyrs. There are indeed dreadful things; but we are not to view even these things with pessimism and despair. In every trouble let us hear the words.

"Do not fear those who kill and defame the body," and let us believe that Providence will lead us through these troubles so that we may possess the eternal good. It is the victory of Providence if we struggle through our troubles to repose in God. God knows about us, God guides, God helps us across earthly hell among devilish souls to arrive at Him. Christ did likewise. He is our example. This is how we are to think about evil; this is how good comes of it to us. What is more, it becomes our glory!

JESUS BRINGS NOT PEACE BUT A SWORD

"*Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.*" (*Matt.* x. 34.)

(*a*) Peace as well as the sword. "Peace upon earth to men of goodwill," is what the angels sang. "My peace I give to you" is what Christ says elsewhere. But He also brings the sword, that men should develop goodwill in battle and be able to enjoy peace. Goodwill is a strong will, and this will has to struggle a great deal against the flesh and the world till it brings the divine will to victory in itself. Because we love peace and want to be good-willed, therefore we take the sword and struggle against all that is against the truly good, correct, faithful will.

(*b*) Progress goes everywhere upon freshly broken ground. Until man breaks and conquers nature, he has no culture. This arises when man pours his ideas on to stone, wood, and iron; this plough, hammer, sword, must be used with an effort. From this the Parthenon and the cathedral at Cologne arise. We carry the ideas of God and the traits of Christ over to the instinctive, rough, sensual man. We want the beautiful, pure, spiritual, soul-world—real culture—we wish to create this. The ideal shines before us; let us rejoice that we are able to form a better, finer man from ourselves.

(*c*) Therefore the saying: "Back to nature," is an erroneous one, if by this we mean life without culture and the world of unruly passions and instincts. "I am come to send a sword"—that is, we have to go forward and not backwards. We have to put much work into our nature, yet we must not spoil it but develop it. We are not to weaken strength but to give it form. Culture often takes from us our natural force and that is not right; but virtue is to keep strength and to render it more noble. Pure, self-disciplined, moderate life which is self-denied in a reasonable manner does not weaken but strengthens man. The sword which Jesus brought never kills; this battle is always fought for the valuable, better life.

BEHEADING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

"*For Herod had apprehended John and bound him, and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife. For John said to him: It is not lawful for thee to have her.*" (*Matt.* xiv. 3.)

(*a*) "It is not allowed"; what a blessing it is, if we know exactly what is allowed, what is lawful, and what is not; if we know the sublime, divine will. This knowledge "is the glory of thy face." We see the amoral confusion of the modern world; sophists put a false construction on everything. If mankind is freely to give its opinions about what are the good and bad sides of love, respect, murder, stealing, and adultery, we should find ourselves in the "*selva oscura*" of Dante. Compared to this, how strong we are, for we know that this is allowed, and that not. This is not a yoke to us, but a fence on the brink of the abyss, the flowery bank of the roaring torrent. It is not a bare command, not the imperative gesture of the corporal's stick, but the radiation of perfection and idealism which lifts and warms us and renders obedience easy. It is a sweet yoke and a light burden.

(*b*) "*But on Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before them: and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask.*" The girl dances and pleases, and the beauty of the body charms the sensual man; he becomes drunk with it and pays her homage. Forgetting himself, he says: I give up all for thee. . . . And the end is that he sees to what beastliness his unholy passion has brought him, and "he becomes sad." Ghosts haunt him, and he says, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead and miraculous forces are in him." Failure, sadness, fear—it is to these the broad way and the broad gate lead; this is the lees of the cup of pleasure and the final end of sinful life.

(*c*) "*Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist. . . . And he sent and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a dish: and it was given to the damsel.*" Behold the pretty, merry dancing-girl's cruel, ugly wish, and how her body becomes distorted before our spiritual eyes, what a pit her heart is in which a base, empty soul resides. But now this beast conquers, that is, she murders and serves up a bloody head to the contemptible troop of guests. And this is the power and mastery of the world! But the veritable feast is celebrated by the confessor who held fast to his strength and faithfulness, which in the world is not conquered either by fear, prison, or hatchet. There is a birthday here also, that of the saint! Our duty is to be faithful to the end; to persevere through thick and thin. This is what exalts God and glorifies man. Prison and hatchet shall not sadden us, but our faithfulness and devoted love shall be our consolation. This is how we have to perform the holy will of God!

"COME APART"

"*And he said to them: Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little . . . and going up into a ship, they went into a desert place apart.*" (*Mark* vi. 31.)

(*a*) Jesus draws us on: Come, let us go out to see the quiet shores beyond which beckon to us, to the proximity of God . . . come away from the market of the world, from supercilious carelessness, where none but such sufferers walk as rattle the chains of custom and human views—come away from the circle of these tired, faded, withered, human faces—from this continual search after self-interest and yet general self-forgetfulness—from this bustle and this Vanity Fair—away, away from this dirt, from this stuffy atmosphere; let the oars work, let oceans come between us, let us go! God calls us, our Creator, our Redeemer, our eternal Judge. The Almighty calls, the merciful One. What an immense grace this is and with what a pleased, beating heart we set out for the feasts of retirement, solitude, and devotional exercise!

(*b*) "*Come apart.*" . . . There is a world where there is only God and I! Only? Is not God all, all and the original reality of infinite worlds? God and I! There His light is, His strength and creating, regenerating power, His purifying spirit which breathes upon us, and there our soul softens and becomes annihilated and yet grows into the infinite. Our continual awakenings bring us the freshness and strength of dawn; our soul becomes darkened and overclouded from the accusations of our conscience, but it rises all the more transparently and purely. This is the world of God, this is His abode; here it is that the wells of His grace gush forth; in this silence we hear His footsteps and His voice. We have to take our sandals off, for this is holy ground. Let us kneel and prostrate ourselves. This is the land where God trains His Prophets and Saints. Let this be our native country also. We shall love and value it!

(*c*) "*And rest.*" If you are rested and the noise and excitement has subsided in your souls, you will awake to the mysterious fact of your lives and you will find yourselves standing before the locked gates of eternity and you have not thought about opening them. We seek God and He does not show Himself, but continually passes us; we expect a face, but His face is the content of life in faith, hope, love and purity; we have to feel and experience that we live and breathe in Him. If we deepen and strengthen this fact we will become saints. We are to wake to the consciousness that to-day, and always, we are living an immortal life, consequently, step for step, we give this incomprehensible world sense and soul. Let us wake to the consciousness of the soul's hidden, inner world and let us develop it. Only faith and the original force of creative love is capable of this. Here it is that we meditate, and join God ; here we work with mind, heart, feeling, and will. And we make use of this " for a while " as the doomed ones would make use of it if this " while " were given to them to make good their lost life.

FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

" *In those days again when there was a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat ; calling his disciples together, he saith to them : I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.*" (*Mark* viii. 1.)

(*a*) Five thousand men assemble around Jesus ; they follow Him with trust and zeal, for He is the leader and master of their soul. All this enthusiasm is surrounded by hunger and desert. They are souls in hungry bodies ; therefore they need bread ; the desert does not give it to them. God gives it. The germs, seeds, and energies are from God ; these are the divine mysteries ; from Him as from the bottomless depth comes this heaving, expanding life. What a mystery all this is ; we feel strangers upon earth when we think of all this ; our heart misgives us, when we look into these depths and into this never tiring stream—incomprehensible, holy stream. " And he asked them, how many loaves have ye ? And they said : seven." And He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks and distributed them, and all of them ate. . . . This also is an incomprehensible, divine fact ; this is directly divine ; the natural crop of wheat is only indirectly so. We adore the Lord in both. Give us bread, we ask, Thou feedest the little birds, they turn their beaks towards Thee ; feed us also. Deep loathing fills us concerning the intemperance with which the undisciplined man disturbs the divine order; they abuse the mysteries of God and derive death from them, not life. We honour the divine flow of life; we do not disturb it and render it unclean. It is holy to us; the function of eating and drinking is also holy to us.

(*b*) Seeing the miracle, the people want to declare Him king. The divine made a victorious entry into the consciousness of the people conqueringly; to perceive this is to be enthusiastic about it. The divine appears to us in the figure of Christ sublimely and conqueringly. The whole of life with its deep ties and mysterious meaning and significance becomes ennobled in a hallowed, magnified, and enhanced way; the desert and the battlefield change to a kingdom. Hail Thou, our King, who renderest us kings also. We cannot evade this if we follow Christ. Let the Lord Jesus be our King; He accepts the kingdom of the heart; but not another one.

(*c*) "*. . . he went up to the mountain to pray.*" Jesus leaves the crowd which offers Him an earthly kingdom; a weak kingdom is that; a kingdom over that people which seeks bodily good and is apathetic towards the good of the spirit; which has no idea of His great plans and hardly understands His great struggles. Jesus has no wish for such a kingdom. He goes on to the mountain to pray and with this He also indicates the sources of real values and the enthusiasm which conquers the formalisms of the world. Up there His soul expands and revives. "*A summo cœlo,*" from the high heavens, He always makes His start, so as to raise the earth. He did not come to reign and oppress, but to raise and educate rulers. We comprehend Thee, O Lord, and are filled with this ambition; this helps us to endure defeat and ill-success.

JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA

"*And immediately he obliged his disciples to go into the ship. . . . And when he had dismissed them he went up to the mountain to pray. And when it was late, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and himself alone on the land. And seeing them labouring in rowing (for the wind was against them) . . . he cometh to them walking upon the sea.*" (*Mark* vi. 45.)

(*a*) The disciples struggle with the waves; it is night and there is a storm; hard, disagreeable, and dangerous is the life of the sailors, bitter is their work. Their soul also easily becomes as bitter as the cruel, hostile waves; yet Jesus knows about them; He walks upon the sea; walks hidden in darkness, but full of goodwill. God walks invisibly amongst us. From Him existence continually rises, souls are in contact with Him with their deepest roots; He reaches and flows into our life. However the moral world that is the conscious human life fluctuates, it is the way of the footsteps of God. A mysterious thing indeed, but a fact! We easily neglect this hidden God, this power which asserts itself in His works and which is shown in Nature as supernatural power. Because of the veil of nature and the fluctuation of the moral world and the stormy pace of progress we ignore Him, and maybe, behave with enmity towards Him. Let us endeavour to get deeper . . . in our heart we find Him. Let us come into contact with Him, as anyhow we are connected with Him metaphysically. O Lord, speak, catch hold of us, draw us more forcefully, that we may come to know Thee, that we may see Thee in the mirage of the world and its culture.

(*b*) "*But they seeing him walking upon the sea, thought it was an apparition, and they cried out.*" They see and are frightened. Strangely, one might say terrifyingly, does the Lord appear. They imagine the apparition to be a hallucination, a spectre. They knew Him to be on the mountain, praying, they did not believe that the Lord could be here amidst the billows and their struggles, and that He could smoothe away the billows and struggles. We believe God, we believe that He is in our churches, and is effective in our Sacraments, but that He should be here, here in the cruel, dreary strifes of life and influence them, and that all this is His territory upon which He wishes to assert Himself—this has a strange effect on us. Let us believe that Jesus wishes to annex the entire life of culture. He is amongst us; our whole life has to be Christ-like in profession, trade, industry, administration, in public and private relations.

(*c*) "*And immediately he spoke with them, and said to them: Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not.*" Jesus assures His disciples that it is He, that they are not to be afraid, that He is concerned with these waves and this tiring struggle, and He has one great proof: He calls Peter to Him and makes him walk on the sea, as if He would say: It is I, here am I, and I give you strength that ye also should walk victoriously. Yes, Our Lord, this is Thy proof; Thou givest strength and we persevere and conquer. We believe that without Thy grace we are not capable of struggling; but with Thee we are capable indeed, even if the world falls to pieces! The proof of Jesus is the pure life which comes from grace. With Jesus it is possible to keep the whole moral law, without Him, not. The more we hold on to this the surer we can be that He is with us.

(*d*) " *And Peter making answer said: Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters. . . . And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water . . . seeing the wind strong, he was afraid.*" (*Matt.* xiv. 28.) When Peter sees the mighty waves, he is afraid, he loses confidence and sinks. The bottomless depth which gapes below our feet is our nothingness. If we view ourselves we come upon deeper and deeper dark abysses and we lose the ground below our feet. We are creatures and we depend on God, without His grace we can do no meritorious good. The weight of our sins, the millstone of hell is round our neck, and how graciously the Lord comes towards us. Into what depths of mercy and grace we look when we think of His Holy Cross or the Sacrament of the Altar. Behold the depths below our feet. And around us the mountainous waves of difficulties are seething. Yet it would be vile of us if we were to doubt. God keeps us above the depths, He lifts us above the mountainous waves. Those who go through life arguing and not praying, who go sceptically and not trusting in God, those will go under. God is our philosophy and our strength!

(*e*) " *And when he began to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus . . . took hold of him.*" Peter *doubts*, that is why he sinks; but his instinct rouses him and with the love of life and the feeling of the impossibility of senseless perishing he cries: Lord, help. . . . Scepticism, mistrust, and pessimism . . . these are all false doctrines. Existence and life place strength at our disposal, and if it is not found in us, it will be found in the living, strong God, who is near us and helps us. To Thee, O God, we cry for help!

PROMISE OF THE EUCHARIST

"*When therefore the multitude saw that Jesus was not there . . . they took shipping, and came to Capharnaum . . . Jesus . . . said: Amen, amen . . . you seek me . . . because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting.*" (*John* vi. 24.)

(*a*) They seek Him and speak with Him; they are excited by the prospects of the "*regnum mundi.*" Christ who had taken refuge on the mountain to pray and who had descended from it again addresses them. It is bread, ye need, is it not? but I did not come to give ye the bread of earthly life, I came to feed your spiritual life, and for this part I necessarily *do not* give bread; I *am* the bread. He who gives life, warms, and incites, He is the bread of men, and what could be more *living bread?* Every soul who enlightens and encourages others, upon whom many depend and grow great, is their living bread. Jesus is the living bread of the world. This is felt by those who have tasted of the world and its honey and gall; those know this who have searched for food for their soul and have begged from authors and philosophers; those have experienced this who go along the world with the hunger of life and taste and search for satisfaction, strength, and health. Behold here is the bread of life, the living bread; this was the living bread in the times of classic Roman law and politics, and this it is now in the times of modern social reform. Thou art our bread, O Lord, through Thee we grow to be great and strong.

(*b*) "*For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink* *indeed.*" (*John* vi. 56.) "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*" We have to eat and we have to drink, we have to take Jesus to us, we have to live on Him! What a forcible, mighty way of expressing the eternal longing of the human soul after God! According to Homer, man opens his soul after the infinite as the bird opens wide its beak. In the Psalms the desire and longing of the soul break forth repeatedly, and the Psalms do not fall into abeyance. Descartes prays this way, and also Nietzsche says: "We can bear it no longer." Tolstoy writes: "As the young bird which falls out of the nest, so the soul cries after God." And Jesus sanctifies and increases the ardent longing and says: Yes, yes, indeed ye have to eat and drink God; that is also why I took a body, that I might not only be your brother but the food of your body and soul. Eat and drink It; let It remain in you, be united with It. The passionate hunger of the generation and its piteous longing will be smoothed over in your souls, and an infinite, sweet, strong feeling will make you happy. How gracious and powerful Jesus is to still such hunger and satisfy such longing!

(*c*) Each eats, and each is united and lives separately with Jesus. All that is public and external is necessarily superficial; depth is internal. Nothing is deep that we do not feel and experience, and from our feelings we become deeper and purer. The intimate soul is a bottomless depth: this is where Jesus goes when He is united with us. Especially in Holy Communion do we go with Jesus to the depth of our feelings and joys. Jesus and I. In silence and sunshine two blue depths surround us; the ocean of the soul and God's blue sky. On such occasions He reassures us (*a*) concerning our sins; He and also of your hearts, for it is the exigence of love. That love wishes firstly for *presence :* " to be with Him," this is the element of its existence. I Myself will be with you, says the Lord. Our heart wishes for the same ; in the hours of suffering and restlessness just as much as in the heat of ardour. Oh, to think that we possess this, that it is here, where men live and struggle ! He is our great common good and bond of union !

(*b*) Presence does not suffice, love demands union. For this purpose the substance of the bread is changed into the glorified body of the Lord Jesus ; by this transformation He approaches us and satisfies one of the heart's most secret and most wonderful longings, that He should be in us, and we in Him. We have also to be transformed, we have to break ourselves and become purer. We have to be filled with the heat of zeal, with divine longing, with thirst for Christ, this is how we are to receive the Lord, and when He becomes dissolved in us, then the following conscious thought shall seize us : " *Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo,*" God is in us who warms us and makes us live.

(*c*) He not only wishes to be united with us but wants to be the *principium* of our activity. In the soul God throbs with the pulse of stronger, more glorious life. It is of this pulse and surge of finer and more spiritual consciousness that we need more and more. Jesus comes and assures us : I live in you, He says, I impart My life to you. As I live divine life out of God, so ye out of Me ; My life grows in you and blossoms forth. Our soul has to catch the touch of God ; this is how we will live divinely out of Him. *Deo gratias.*

"HE THAT EATETH ME SHALL LIVE"

"*He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.*" (*John* vi. 58.)

(*a*) Philosophy and culture seek for the more beautiful, stronger life. Jesus says: This is what I give you in the Holy Eucharist. He shaped the divine-human life in Himself: the ideas of God in the human soul, divine feelings, intentions, and spirituality in the human heart. As the air streams through the organ and swells into music, and the eyes change the quiver of the ether to colours, so through the soul of Jesus the divine poured forth in beautiful, strong, human life. From it we have to derive life. For this the motto is "union." We have to cling to Him receptively and to acquire ruling, ineradicable ideas and thoughts which rest in Jesus. Union renders us capable of this, for it makes us intimate. Betrothed united with betrothed, friend with friend, and mother with child live in intimate, soft, sweet, connection. The Holy Eucharist also trains us for this intimate love; with fire it burns into us and with tears it imparts to us the ideas and feelings of Jesus.

(*b*) Strong, Christ-like love transfers us to a bright, sunny atmosphere. If we come from the atmosphere of factories, where we breathe soot and dust, where the machines and human faces are oily and we do not see the sunshine; or from where the world is noisy, into pine-forests, then our lungs get clearer, our blood stirs, and the fatigued, stooping man stretches and straightens himself. Pedagogy and hygiene help this new man. Jesus works in a similar manner, especially by placing the selfish, instinctive, and also of your hearts, for it is the exigence of love. That love wishes firstly for *presence :* " to be with Him," this is the element of its existence. I Myself will be with you, says the Lord. Our heart wishes for the same ; in the hours of suffering and restlessness just as much as in the heat of ardour. Oh, to think that we possess this, that it is here, where men live and struggle ! He is our great common good and bond of union !

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(*c*) Vigorous life perseveres and makes sacrifices; so does the strife of the vigorous individuality; for this we also need the warm unity with Jesus. He teaches us to take part in His suffering and so does He partake of ours when we embrace Him. The thorn which pricks us is from His wreath of thorns. Furthermore, that wreath encircles two heads, and the wounds pierce two hands and two hearts: His and ours. Here is the source of sacrificial love; this is whence Christianity derives: "*inter consolationes Dei et tribulationes mundi ambulat Ecclesia*," on the thorny road God consoles us with His person. The spirit of sacrifice comes from Him and it is in the strength of sacrifice that the beautiful souls, the "*animæ sublimiores*," become formed (*Pontif. Rom.*). We derive this spirituality and frame of mind from the blood of Jesus and from His kiss.

THE HEART THE FOUNT OF EVIL

"*For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries . . . these are the things that defile a man.*" (*Matt.* xv. 19.)

(*a*) Do not let us trust ourselves, but let us look with a deep searching glance into our heart. We see a world there which is full of ravines and precipices; it is an uncertain, unsteady, "quaking" ground. When we pray, our heart warms and an agreeable warmth of life runs through us; we do not think of those many bad feelings and the passions of cold, indifferent envy which rest at the bottom of our soul or which hide like snakes below our flowering feelings. But how rapidly spring changes to winter in our soul and flowers to colourless, rattling seeds. Therefore, when we pray, this consciousness should also accompany us; when we kneel in front of the cross and hold the rosary we must realize what we are, and in our zeal we bind our *cilicium*. Through this we become objective praying beings and through our prayers we become really better.

(*b*) It may be that our soul is quiet; that our thoughts are charged with electricity, that our heart seems willing; but this is a relative and easily upset equilibrium. How many different sympathetic and antipathetic men surround us! Many would pick a quarrel with us. No matter, we know this, but we are not disturbed by it. Opposition, strife, and struggle is our fate; ideals, goods, and rights are one-sided; some have to be broken down that better ones should take their place. We will be magnanimous, for we know that there is much prejudice and partiality "*extra et intra muros*." If we pray in this way, we grow out of our surroundings and will be superior to them and consequently reasonable souls.

(*c*) In our judgments we are often conceited and fall in love with one or the other of our ideas. We make plans and dream! Oh, how many weavers sit with us at the loom of the same life, who do not accommodate themselves to us! So our plans come to naught, our dreams disperse, and our soul falls into despondency; it sinks as the badly leavened dough. Let us look upon our notions and pet ideas with humility. Often a revision and restoration ot ideas is wanted. But those who pray well possess an elasticity of soul and are capable of being refreshed and renewed. The youth of the Saints is restored in life-reforming prayer.

(*d*) In our enthusiasm we often do not see the difficulties. We set out for life with youthful strength, but with little humility. For what is man even in a town, what in history, and what in Nature? We have to keep our place amongst the wheels of mechanism, and also amongst the storms of centuries. Of this we will only be capable if we raise ourselves in faith, beyond our extent, beyond our span of time, when we are capable of viewing the unfathomable perspectives of world-development. In this holy dusk we come upon ourselves and, quite near to us, upon the Lord. We know that He is God and we a finite speck of dust, but it is our good fortune that we can cling to His feet and, being attached to Him, can walk the ways of eternity.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN

"*And Jesus . . . retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out said to him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.*" (*Matt.* xv. 21.)

(*a*) Every argument is futile which says that man is kept down by the steel web of the forces and instincts of nature and that he is incapable of going against and rising out of them. This argument is futile, for his heart cries out and his consciousness says: Of course you will rise out of it! You are faced with a mechanical power, but do you not look down upon it and invoke a higher power? Go on, cry out, it has to exist and it has to help you. This world is only something, not everything; and our soul reaches beyond the something; therefore we pray! The prayer of the woman, the "have mercy on me" asks for the sovereign action of the Lord which another cannot achieve. Thou, O Lord, Thou shall act; Thou shalt condescend; have mercy, and will; our strength, merits, and endeavour do not make up for this. This is the psychology of the humility of prayer; that is why the woman continually cries and kneels; she is rejected and again comes forward and approaches and prays and adores, and her praying will conquers!

(*b*) "*Who answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying: Send her away; for she crieth after us. And he answering, said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel! . . . It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs.*" The hardness of Jesus nearly embarrasses us; it is cold and deaf, and it rejects. The "heathen" world turned away from the love of God, it obstinately went its own way, that is why the heart of God was cold towards it. With dread we see the "*mysterium iniquitatis*" in death, pain, suffering, decay, decadence, and darkening; man does this against God. "But he answered not a word." In His soul how Jesus viewed the devastation of the heathen spirit; His heart contracted from it and His lips became dumb. The sons of God became dogs, how true it is! But the time of mercy will come, it is not here yet. The mustard seed has first to be sown in the ground, only then the birds of heaven can rest in its boughs, the souls without difference of nationality! There is to be no heathen spirit in us; no cold, irreverent, rebellious, distrustful disposition. Towards such God is deaf as well as dumb.

(*c*) "*But she said: Yea, Lord: for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering, said to her: O woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee even as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour.*" The frank and straightforward recognition of our own sinfulness and impotence contrasted with the saving and merciful will of God is the way of our salvation. Here self-respect and honour is forfeited, here absolute homage is wanted; this is what sovereign mercy corresponds with. We can only then be heroic, magnanimous souls if we first pay homage to God for life and death in dust and ashes. In us the basis is "*miseria*" and in God it is "*misericordia*," but further there are heroism, virginity, martyrdom, and divinity for us. Do not let us mistake the Christian psychology.

HEALING OF THE DEAF AND DUMB

"*And again going out of the coasts of Tyre, he came . . . to the sea of Galilee . . . and they bring to him one deaf and dumb; and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him.*" (*Mark* vii. 31.)

We have to look into the soul of Jesus; there He stands opposite the deaf and dumb man; opposite this sad figure of dull, stupid, animal existence and He is moved to mercy. He begs Him to help. Therefore He takes him aside and puts his fingers into his ears and spits and touches his tongue. He sighs and says with strong will as if He would pour His soul upon him: Be opened.

(*a*) We have to approach others with a strong, healthy, beautiful soul and impart to them our life and feelings. Spittle is one of the elements of life and health; but the spittle of a furious or tired man is poisonous, it infects; that of the healthy one serves life. Jesus touches the tongue of the ailing one with spittle, with His strong life. The weak, ailing, doubting, dark, mistrusting souls do not heal; their disposition and spirituality infect; whereas the influence of the noble-minded upon the soul is like the impression of well-grown, powerful trees, flowers, or the firmament. The beauty and goodness of souls is public good, like the sunshine and the breath of the forest.

(*b*) "*And taking him from the multitude apart, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he groaned.*" Jesus sighs; He helps with the deep emotion of the soul; with tears, fire, and longing He lifts the soul out of its stupidity. Energies are wanted for breaking down recklessness and dullness; a scorching soul has to be poured upon the languid souls. We have to be white-hot with prayer; from out of the depths have we to start if we want to help and move souls effectively. This is also how we have to endeavour to move our own souls; we have to sigh with elemental force; we have to cry out from the depths! This is what Eliseus did, he bent over the dead, placed his lips to the lips of the dead and his heart to the heart of the other and deeply sighed: Stretch yourself, live!

(*c*) "*And said to him: Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed.*" Be opened; says Jesus. Here where physical trouble is the point He breaks down every obstacle with His words of command; He wills it and so it is. This is how He sometimes helps the deaf and dumb soul, He turns and changes it; He cries out and His voice is heard even by those who do not wish to hear; but this is not His usual way. He generally moves us and knocks at the door of our soul, so that He expects interest, goodwill, and attention on our part also. He wants us to hear, understand, and follow his advice. "*Open* the door to me, my brother, my betrothed," He says, "and let me in; I do not break in and smash doors; I ask for goodwill and love; that cannot be stolen, that has to be given freely." Let us listen to the encouraging, stimulating promptings of Jesus which guard and attract; this is the assertion of strength and life in us; let us always co-operate with grace which precedes us and shows us the way.

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

"*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*" (*Matt.* xvi. 6.)

(*a*) There is much darkness and many shadows upon the soul, but we are not allowed to weaken our life with them. We have to conquer darkness with light. The source of our darkness is our poor, unstable self. In the deficient garb of narrow-mindedness it is as weak and freezing as a child of the South in a hard winter. The night-light of the sick-room is its special light. The unhealthy dusk of selfishness broods in it, from which the soul becomes wearisome, lazy, and depressed. It is sometimes disgusted with itself. Disgust sometimes appears also in ardent souls. Prayers and the Sacraments do not stimulate them. They lament and complain as if they were living on the outskirts of the lake of Bethesda. They hate themselves and have no spirit or inclination to live. What is to conquer after all? Good or evil? Are we to lapse into complete despondency or are we to break with this helpless "asceticism"? What is this dark, helpless self-degradation for? What is this cave-life for? What we need is the height of the Alps; our nature demands the fresh air, the sunshiny peaks, roaring brooks, scented pines, dewy ferns; not this fearsome, chilly way of lamentation.

(*b*) Strong natures have an instinctive aversion for such a weak, overclouded view of life and look at Christianity also as gloomy. How far are they right about it? We cannot disperse the shadows and scratch off the birth-marks of our nature; with original sin many ignoble things are woven into us. But we cannot rest content with this, for we know that good, and not evil, conquers. Good is always much more plentiful than evil. Evil is barely a shadow, the shadow of finiteness; but it is not the frame of life; therefore evil is a servile power; it always serves and is always a tool. Through this shadow we struggle into brightness, into the light where we may develop.

(*c*) Spiritual life needs brightness and light; it derives this from the natural brain and from faith, when it sees the ideas of God also in nature but which have to be ennobled; and sees them in the instincts, inclinations, necessities of life and in physical life also. Do not let us loathe nature; this loathing is not true, not real, not realistic! Do not let us loathe humanity; we have to be superior to the sons of the world, we have to stand high, but we are not allowed to look down upon and despise anyone. He who despises is a dark soul. Nothing develops in darkness; not even the tadpole grows to a frog in the dark; many solutions do not crystallize in the dark. We will possess light and brightness if we see the ideas of God in nature and grace; if we look upon God and His works with love and rejoice in them!

(*d*) Light and brightness are the intercourse of feelings with God. If we get to know the creative ideas of God, then by this we are already near to Him, but what a different proximity is that of living attachment, and chiefly the intimacy which shines forth from the Holy Sacrament. Maybe a feeling seizes us that this is superfluous; perhaps we content ourselves with knowledge; but in such case we would neither understand the Lord nor ourselves. He descended to us upon the wings of the heart; He did not deny the idea, the thought, but He gave a warm basis to thought and drove into its service the indispensable forces of life, its instincts and inclinations, the passions of the heart, and the consolations of actual presence. From the cold brain He leads our heart into warm life, our heart which faltered in the transparent, cold atmosphere of the high regions of the intellect; here it becomes warmed. Proximity, unreservedness, coexistence, real union, this wonderful, natural connection carries us off into the life and friendship of Jesus, into contact with Him. Such a soul verily says: "*Mea nox obscurum non habet*": my night is not dark.

WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT THE SON OF MAN IS?

"*And Jesus came into the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi: and he asked his disciples, saying: Whom do men say that the son of man is? But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*" (*Matt.* xvi. 13.)

(*a*) For whom do men take the Son of man? They take Him for man, for a great, prophetic, fiery-souled man, for a Holy, wonderful man, but for a man. Similar to Elias, Jeremias, John the Baptist, similar to the noble-minded, great-hearted men such as have already existed and will exist; similar to men who are related to God, in whom depths open, and who walk the heights and help others to arrive there also, who are productive, who create and shape, who are the blessing and pride of humanity, but are bone of their bone, blood of their blood. Man recognizes the man in Christ. But there exists another knowledge which has a higher origin and deeper effect, which recognizes another reality in the imperial, historical figure; this is the faith. This not man inspires, but God; it does not start on human paths but on the finger-prints of God. We are men but we also listen to God; we have faith and believe; our spiritual world is in contact with Him, receives His impressions, and becomes enriched by them.

(*b*) "*But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered: Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.*" Thou, an historical personage, art God. Thou hast a soul, eyes, and mouth, but at the bottom of Thy soul Thou art one with the Son of God; Thou art He! Thy soul sees the infinite although it is a finite, created, human soul; it sees the gleam of the Truth, God, the infinite Act; it sees how everything has its source in Him. The soul of Christ sees with delight the fullness of the Divine Being, it sees also the secret of its being united with the Son of God. It is from this consciousness and from the tides of eternal life that the soul of Jesus is fresh, magical, deep, enchanting, strong, and rejoicing. It is the connecting point of God and the world! His flesh and blood correspond with this life-integrity. His immaculate origin and kingly blood were conceived by the Holy Ghost; "Christus" is He, that is, anointed, and the iridescent wreath of the Holy Ghost's grace is upon His head. Great, lovable, and undauntable is He. God we adore in Him, greatness we admire, lovableness gives us courage, and we acquiesce in the undauntable. Jesus our Lord, bread of life, milk of life, our source of life art Thou!

(*c*) "*Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.*" Simon, thou art the son of man and this faith will strengthen, raise, and direct thee and help thee to salvation. Without this there is no happiness; for the reason that without it there is no view of life, no hope, no courage. We grope about uncertainly without Christ, and the weight of our sins without deliverance is a tombstone below which we die alive. Science does not render the soul happy, art and love do not fill it; what we want is strong, rich, immortal, happy existence; this we do not find in empiricism. The sceptic is not happy, nor the one who doubts, nor the decadent, blase one. We believe Christ, that with the son of Jona we also will find happiness in strong, brave faith. This we will not abandon. If we experience it we will not doubt. Therefore we will not look upon and criticize faith from the outside, just as we do not look at the glass-paintings of a Gothic cathedral from the outside, but experience it from the inside. We view its beauty and enjoy its strength in ourselves; this is how we will be happy.

PETER THE ROCK

"*And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.*" (*Matt.* xvi. 18.)

(*a*) And I say also unto thee, and say it so that I also do it, I make thee a rock. The house of Christ is a house built upon the rock. The rock means strength which is not upset, it means strong resistance which is not softened. The Lord wished to assure us faith, its Gospel, its doctrine, its spirit and grace; these He did not entrust to letters which kill; not to books which are torn asunder; not to science which the human brain distorts; but He entrusted it to an institution, to the Church, and that that might be strong, He makes a rock of its head; makes him strong and infallible in faith and teaching. Behold the house and home of my soul; the sweet light of truth does not go out in it; its first eminence is its foundation on a cliff. This is from where we view the waves of the ocean, the chaos of opinions, the strife of spirits. It is good to be in this house! We love and honour this rock; we kiss its feet.

This rock is our Holy Father, in whom Peter lives, upon whom the Church, the home of our soul, stands.

(*b*) In this house our other treasures are deposited. Here are we reborn, here educated and anointed heroes; here is its table with the Bread of the Angels; here floats His breath with which He breathed upon His Apostles and said: Receive the Holy Ghost. This is where our soul is healed from its wounds; in one word this is the house of the children of God. In this house Jesus invisibly surrounds us; His blessing trembles upon the Holy water, the incense, the candles, the palm-branches; it floats in the peal of the church-bells. And behold the foundation, the head and steward of the house, behold Peter. Jesus entrusted His treasures to his hands and gave him His keys, and these keys open the gates of heaven. The Apostolic mission with which he sends bishops and priests into the world is all entrusted to him. He opens and closes, he binds and loosens. He is the link between the many tongues and races of Christendom, the living centre of religious life and life of faith. How then should we not protect and help him to the best of our ability?

(*c*) "*I say: Thou art Peter . . . this rock.*" Thou art strong by My grace and not by thy own strength; thou art strong by the blessing of My prayer, for Simon, Simon, the devil wanted to have thee so as to tear thee away from Me, but I prayed for thee that thy faith should not decline and that thy brothers should be attached to Me through thee. Christ provides for His Church and its rock-foundation, that it should not crumble. This is the ambition of Christ. He conducts affairs so that the Pope should not be mistaken when teaching. What a grace the care of the Good Shepherd for us is; whether

He takes us upon His shoulder or conducts us to this house of His. We give Thee thanks, dear Shepherd. Your prayers we also enjoy; we live from them! Behold at every step we meet with the invisible figure of Christ and His blessing in this sweet, holy House, in the Church.

THE HOLY CHURCH OF CHRIST

"*I will build my church* . . ." (*Matt.* xvi. 18.)

(*a*) This is the great house. It is meant for and open to all peoples; it is not restricted to Rome, not to one country or one part of the globe. Where the Apostolic creed is said and the Church is mentioned there it is as much at home as the brethren themselves. Neither is the Pope a stranger there, just as faith and eternal hope which live in the heart are not strangers. He is their foundation, their rock, their steward, and their head. This faith induces nations to pay homage to this House and the attachment to this House is not diminished either by space, time, nor by the varying grades of culture. It stands above national enmities, this unique, great House, the home of souls. Nations have attached the foundations of their existence to the rock of this House; it is from the steward of this House that they asked for crowns for their kings; on the other hand they helped him to obtain reverence, power, law, and riches. This house was the tower of morals and ideals against violence and barbarism.

(*b*) It is a holy House. It breathes and educates holiness. Its breath comes out of the heart of Jesus. Its aim, value, and mission are pure morality; its birthmark is holiness. Its value is measured upon the scale of moral effects by the

Holy Scripture and history of culture. Its glory and strength has always lain in its seeking for, loving, and instilling morality. Tertullian said that in the prisons Christians are only to be found for their faith and never because of their morals and that their daughters "*magis timent, si ad lenones, quam si ad leones damnantur*": they rather fear panders, than lions. This is the wreath which was upon the head of the Church in America, India, China, Japan; it is by this that it has to be recognized now also. What a duty we have to strive for holiness and upon what a decay we work if by our morals we compromise this holy House! We are inspired by the immaculateness of Christ's betrothed, and are prepared to sacrifice ourselves for it.

(*c*) It is a sublime House. Its organism is divine, Christ created it. He set up divine authority in it and this stands victoriously against epochs, culture, problems, and conflicts. Let us love and trust this authority and at the same time let us fill our life in the church with the content of our ideals. Let us partake of the duties of the present age and everyday life and let us apply our energy to them. Do not let us fear that we do not comply with faith, if we occupy ourselves with the soil; the spirit has to evolve through material development. The problems of to-day are new signs of the wounds of the man fallen into the hands of scoundrels, but the Samaritan shall be the same as of old, the same Christ-like spirit, the same Catholic zeal.

(*d*) It is a universal House. The continuation of Christ upon earth is the Church; its characteristic is that it was given to entire humanity as opposed to philosophy which belongs to few. This belongs to all of us; through it we all become wise, rich, and strong. And if it has many unstable children, we are not to be scandalized by this. The sun has lost none of its brilliance, beauty, and energy, since men have known that it has solar spots. So be it also with the Church; let us love it and permit its sweet, strong energy to develop in us.

(*e*) It is an Apostolic House. Owing to legal succession every cell of it is connected with the Apostles and through them with the Lord. Whether we live in the second, the sixth, or the twentieth century is all the same; Apostolic mission, Apostolic doctrine, Apostolic power, pulse in every vein of this sublime, beautiful body. It does not become old; it becomes more grave, but is always beautiful. The Mass to-day is in essence the same as the Mass of St. Paul or St. John, and in the absolution of the mendicant friar we recognize the power of St. Peter. With this faith we come and go; we receive Apostolic doctrine, we win Apostolic consolation, and to-day, as ever, we recognize the traits of beauty of the Apostolic Church.

CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS

"*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" (*Matt.* xvi. 24.)

(*a*) Jesus beckons; He wishes us to follow Him, wishes us to take up our cross and follow. The idea comes to us: Does He wish us to go with Him? We ask this because we see how much He loves the solitary ways. He came alone, in quiet night did He come into the world; He walked solitarily, no one knew the depths of His soul; unaided He carried His cross to Golgotha; alone He rose from the dead, and descended into hell and ascended into heaven. He had to walk these great ways by Himself; for the ways of great souls are solitary ways. They are not understood. The ways of our souls are also solitary ways; others may love, support, and encourage us, but after all in the world of our consciousness and its depths and wastes we walk alone. Only God whom we see at the bottom of our soul and out of whom we also are, only He is with us; He is the soul of our soul; He is in me, and I in Him! We have to be absorbed in Him, that we may progress; to grow into Him that we may develop. We have to imbibe His strength and grace so as to live a divine life. Indeed it is on to this solitary path that the Lord beckons to us. Here it is where we are to be reborn, here we are to suffer and crucify our sensuality, here descend to hell for the salvation of our soul. Here let us rise from our grave, and here ascend to heaven. *Deus meus et omnia!* My God, Thou my rich world; my God, Thou my deep, forceful, sublime life! My God, Thou my All!

(*b*) These inner depths are terrible; life is such a mystery that we are not able to endure it, and some sort of deep mistrust overpowers us, especially when we view the errors and enormities of the soul. The depths of life are filled with the disappointments of subjectivity. Therefore we are in need of outward instructions which point out divine life to us objectively, and this is the example of Christ, His feeling, disposition, frame of mind, passion, intimacy, prayer, His words, His talk, His longing, and His strife. . . . Behold the pattern of divine life; come, follow Me in these footsteps. Thou wouldst not well understand divine life. Around this problem your philosophers becomes lost like the flies on the fly-paper; your Prometheus goes mad, and your Don Juans rot away but do not teach you life. I am the giver and reformer of life; I gave the ideal unto ye: this ideal is Christ. He is your born interpreter: *splendor gloriæ, figura substantiæ*, shaping, development of divine life. O Jesus, our soul turns to Thee with the mission of eternal life; we glow with enthusiasm for Thee! Sweet art Thou to us, Thou who hast been born for us and hast come for us and to us. How strongly we attach and bind ourselves to Thee, O Thou our strong cedar, our palm and olive tree; the tendrils of our soul would creep in the dust and be trodden down upon the ways of the world, if Thou didst not stand before us and at our side and if Thou didst not say: Clasp me, I am thy Lord, thy ideal and strength.

(*c*) Strong and mighty modeller and model of our life, our way and pioneer art Thou, Lord Jesus: "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 *Cor*. i. 30), who captureth souls and placeth them upon the way of strife that they might progress. Thou art the kingly way of souls; the systems of others are wrong ways, pathless desert-tracks, rattlesnakes rattle upon them with great noise and bewitch humming-birds and finches. Thou art the way of life! Elsewhere Thou sayest that the path of salvation is a narrow one; but allow us ardently to avow: Thy way is verily the way of troops, troops of souls proceed upon it and not one dislodges or oppresses the other, not one! It is not narrow for souls, but we understand Thee, it is narrow for bodies. There is room for millions upon it but without the baggage! Thou art also the way of nations, "*via nationum*," the way of progress and welfare for the peoples. And it is extraordinary that this way is bordered by many beggars, lame and blind ones; they sit by the roadside and criticize; they criticize the direction of the road, its stones, elevations, and bridges; they criticize the passers-by; they call them cranks, tainted ones, and ailing, but they do not even move and with all their wisdom do not get on in the least. Let us leave the beggars and go onward. Jesus beckons: *Sequere me!* follow me!

"HE THAT WILL SAVE HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT"

"*For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*" (*Matt.* xvi. 25-26.)

(*a*) Our chief aim is: to discover life; that qualitative, eternal life which man lives already here on earth. For we live eternal life indeed; we have already started it here; the question is, how are we to live it, so that we may live it strongly and happily? First of all, let us discover our soul. Astronomy has placed the centre of the world in the sun, philosophy has placed it in the "I"; how much more have "my world," my moral life, and all my values their centre and essence in my soul. My soul is the pearl of the universe; even the universe is too small for it; it is enough for its grave, but not sufficient for the spreading of its wings; time is a negligible, small quantity, a bond twixt two infinities! Oh, my God, what a sublimity the soul is, this eternity and infinity dressed in space and time as in a disguise. We know it is not infinite, but a relation, a son of infinity, there it belongs; that is why the world and universe are too small for it. I respect the soul! When I look into myself I am filled with foreboding; I stand before eternal gates and my soul becomes alive from the throb of another life. Strength and longing seizes me.

(*b*) In consequence I infinitely value the soul and do not give it away for anything. Sin I will not commit, for that would be madness and it is my passion and joy to rid myself of sin! In my faith I attach myself to God as to my Father . . . to beauty, to strength, happiness. I attach myself in the hope that He helps and I trust. I attach myself in love and this is more than if I spoke the tongue of angels . . . and were a prophet . . . and knew everything. This is more, for this is the assertion of "God in me," and "filled with God"; this is that sweet and strong devoutness and reassurance. . . . How much such a divine soul towers above every science, culture, and power, above these impersonal greatnesses.

(*c*) It is from the faith of the infinite value of the soul that the saints and our culture originate. They asserted this infinite value in institutions, laws, and liberty. A conquering force is that world-despising consciousness which feels that it is more than everything else. . . . This is the plough which ploughed the rocks of tyranny into fertile soil. This consciousness will develop and build up my soul-world also: I will be noble, pure, strong, and chivalrous for the sake of my soul!

VALUE OF THE SOUL. I

"*For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*" (*Matt.* xvi. 26.)

(*a*) The value of man is not science, not art, not culture, not political power. Man stepped into the world with the consciousness of his strength and opposed it to Nature. "I," said he to himself, "exist, I have knowledge, I possess, I will, I act," and he placed his hand upon the world and asserted himself in knowledge—and created a beautiful world in Greece, and raised Rome to the height of power. But this greatness is not sufficient if his works do not release him, but disable him; if knowledge becomes an agony and man turns into a Prometheus—if the beautiful earth becomes his prison which restricts and locks him in—when power expropriates the individual and makes a slave of him, namely, when man becomes less than his work and when this work is a burden and obstruction to him; man becomes a function; he works upon the immeasurable building of culture until his coals and metal last; he works, but from the comprehended, modelled, and hammered world he cannot extract its value; for it is he that gives it value, his heart, his brain, his arm, his hand. Behold, therefore, not the elaborated, worked-out world of science, art, and culture gives us value, but its value is from us and through us: how much more will our value be in ourselves!

(*b*) The Gospel points out the soul as an infinite treasure: What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world . . . as if it would say: "What worth is the whole world compared to you?" Nothing. Our Saviour's words awake in us an immense consciousness which considers the world as nothing. Seek the kingdom of God, "*et hæc omnia*," and all the rest—that certain "all else" that is not even worth mentioning—will be added to you. That will be given you into the bargain. The Gospel makes an urgent exhortation to perfection: "Be perfect," it says, ". . . Have no fear, for God enlightens and helps ye: *sicut lucerna fulgoris illuminabit te.*" . . . It asserts great, irreconcilable contrasts: "No one can serve two masters"; as if it would say: "either or." But give your entire soul, the whole of it; I will not excuse the slightest part of it. It wishes us to live a strong, enthusiastic life and not to shrivel. Let us go through the world with divine consciousness: "*Considerate volucres cœli*: behold the vultures of heaven . . ." Freedom I wish you.

(*c*) Oh, sweet, strong, blissful sentiment; sentiment and consciousness of the infinite value. This we have from Thee, dear Jesus. Thou hast lifted our head, Thou hast placed a wreath upon it. Thou hast urged and questioned me: Answer, who art thou? and I stammered: I am a man. Thou saidst: It is not enough what thou hast said, say more. And I said: I am Thy brother. And Thou wast not satisfied even with that; I had to say more and I dared to say it: I am divine! Yes, this they did not know either in Rome, Greece, or Babylon, and there are still many in Europe who do not know it! Men seek and guess; they long to be like Prometheus, Oedipus, Cæsar, and the Borgias! We loathe all this; we are Christ-like. We love knowledge as well as art and culture, but we look upon them with the eyes of Jesus and with the heart of Jesus we ascend these as steps towards the more perfect and divine existence!

VALUE OF THE SOUL. II

"*What doth it profit . . . if he suffer the loss of his own soul.*" (*Matt.* xvi. 26.)

(*a*) We must not lose our soul, for that is an immortal entity worth more than the world; it is our own self. We, who awake to the consciousness of ourselves and the world, of strength, law, necessity, and freedom, and by so doing stand above the whole. We and the whole—is what we say to ourselves—we are more, the whole is mere confusion. This world is mere confusion, a numberless crowd, a jostling throng, each member of which is unknown to the other, though each stands next to each other. And opposite these strange unknown others here am I; I also am existence and reality, like those numberless others, but my reality is reality in spiritual form, it is transfigured existence; I am a unity which joins the throng, which notices in the many unknown others time and space, but rises above time and space, as indivisible I am one in space, and as immortal the same in time. Behold the strong, higher existence and reality . . . behold the soul. According to its reality and nature it is transfigured existence, the "other world." Its functions are called sight, knowledge, will, but the functions are only functions. It is the "I" that forms the chain of ideas; it is the "I" that bears within itself the expressions of will. The soul is not an idea, a thought, but the soul thinks the idea, the thought. The soul is not a survey, but the soul surveys. Thoughts change and pass by; I think the thoughts. O soul, unconquerable soul, how many have denied thee! They wanted to dissolve thee into infinity, to submerge thee in the stream of ideas (Spinoza); they wanted to identify thee with the idea itself and called thee the point of intersection of thoughts and feelings (Mach), but all this is insufficient. We rejoice in the mysterious, deep reality; in this earthly manifestation of infinity and eternity. We rejoice; we thank Thee, our God, that Thou hast created us as such, created us superior to the whole world—created us as immortals. We look upon the world in which we live and above which we are forced to rise with consciousness, superiority, and triumph. Our centre of gravity is different! Different instincts and inclinations awake in us, longings for immortality and eternal life. Let us repeatedly rejoice in our immortality and thank God for it. He is our sun, to Him we turn. Let us likewise look upon every individual with reverence; the high esteem in which we hold our soul teaches us to do so. The higher we value our soul the greater honour we have for man and we hate all the more everything which degrades man, the individual just as much as society: unbelief, pauperism, prostitution, war, alcoholism, etc.

(*b*) In life we see, on the one hand, the inevitable sequence of things, the law by which certain reactions are brought about, and we marvel at the tremendous mechanism by which multiplicity is held together in a certain unity. Alongside this there is also an activity which originates within myself, which enters my consciousness independently of every reflex movement, every stimulus, every external exertion, which manifests itself as an act of feeling or will. This is the world of spirit. It contains depth and intimacy. Philosophers and poets measure its depths and guess at its heights; an immense spiritual labour goes on in this world which asserts itself in logical creations, in the types of individuals, in the power of liberty, and in the beauty of morality. Everything here raises man and awakes in him the rejoicing, thankful consciousness of his strength. This is whence the force of will originates, which fights the moral battles. This is the achieving, decisive, creating force. This is constructive, initiative force. I own something—it consciously says—and I will achieve it.

Oh, if we would comprehend and value this inner world, this our life! If only we were sensible of the superiority of this *inner world*, which is superior to every existence, every treasure and fortune! If we would only endeavour to assert the forces of this inner world, we would acquire divine consciousness. Whereas we go about bound to the social, legal, and economic questions of the outer world and deserve the complaint of the mediæval mystic: "What doth it profit me to be a king, if I know it not?" I am king indeed . . . I can work . . . I can will . . . construct . . . create . . .! We have a will, therefore God, virtue, and happiness may be ours. Oh, what a great power the will is, what a benediction the goodwill. In Thy will, O Lord, we delight, "as in so many riches."

(*c*) Contrasted with mechanical necessity, we see the force of our will asserted in freedom. At every step the law accompanies us, but it merely helps us to realize our freedom more vividly. Only those know the law fully who are free. It is in liberty and freedom that we urge and emphasize law and its accomplishment and it is in liberty that we give shape to activity according to the instructions of the law. Liberty is the spiritualization of the law. The free man fulfils the law of his own accord; he rises out of the iron-furnace of mechanism and fulfils the law more perfectly than sun, moon, stars, ocean currents, chemical and physical phenomena, fulfils it infinitely more perfectly, for he knows it, wills it, and accomplishes it *freely*! Oh, ye helpless things, ye revolving, whirling, swarming, moving crowds; ye suffering figures of existence; ye do not act but are merely moved. The one who acts am I; I act when I assert my free will. God demands free activity from us, consciously free service, free homage and love. Only such honours Him. The conscious homage of the heart honours and reveres God and serves Him more truly than the sun, moon, and ocean. *Laudamus Te, benedicimus Te, adoramus Te!* O my sublime, kingly, divine soul, feel and experience the nobility of thy race, thou immortal being! This consciousness is our consolation, our force, and our joy. Do not let us cling to the dust and clod, we have wings, let us soar to our Jesus, to our Lord. Let us whisper trustingly and continually in our prayers: Lord, Thou hast redeemed me. Behold, God values me as much as Thy precious Blood!

THE TRANSFIGURATION

"*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became as white as snow. . . . And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here.*" (*Matt.* xvii. 1-4.)

(*a*) The Lord was transfigured by His soul, by His soul glowing with prayer, "and whilst He prayed His countenance was altered." (*Luke* ix. 29.) This is the transfiguration of the soul rendered happy by union with God. Flesh and blood, the difficulty and darkness of earthly existence, puts on soul. We continually strive that more and more soul should suffuse the flesh and instincts, that more soul should be poured upon work and social institutions. The work of the soul which clothes flesh and instincts with superior beauty and light is called prayer. In our prayers we strive to be reshaped, to be purer, nobler, and more spiritual. The first step towards moral transfiguration is the humble, warm, strong, prayer!

(*b*) When this warm stream is set free in our soul and a higher, sweet light filters into our life, we exclaim with Peter: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; here upon the high mount of spiritual elevation, here in the regions of divine enlightenments, here in the bright cloud of prayer, here, far from the world and near to God. It is good, good indeed, for us to be here, so let us make use of this spring-blossoming of consolations, but let us keep in mind that we have to descend from this mount to the dusty, flat world. Let us descend as one whose soul is radiant and whose soul is filled with the balmy, spiced air of the heights."

(*c*) Let us look at the other transfiguration. "And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad and he fell upon his face, praying and saying: . . . My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me . . . and he cometh to his disciples and findeth them asleep." (*Matt.* xxvi. 37.) This is the "*facies*" which sweats blood; this is the outpouring of the sad soul over the body; the state of desolation and darkness. The man of earth shrinks from it and sleeps; he is happy to forget himself. But Christ prays. He struggles but acquiesces in the will of God. Thou dost wish it, my Lord, from Thy hands do I accept this cup; even if I do not feel consolation, no matter; I lock the guarantee of glory into my consciousness which assures me that the divine will accomplished at time of desolation is the seed of eternal life and that of every grace.

LORD, IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE

"*Lord, it is good for us to be here.*" (*Matt.* xvii. 4.)

(*a*) Jesus prays, and being transfigured is arrayed in glory. What is the meaning of this? We generally refer to Christ arriving at the Mount of the Ascension by way of Golgotha; but we do not pay attention to His having arrived at Golgotha by way of Tabor. He was able to fight His battle victoriously, for evil, pain, and suffering became spiritualized in His soul. His soul stood and lived in light, that is why He could conquer darkness. It is on Tabor that He presented the elevation of His soul, "*ascensus in Deum.*" He teaches mankind *spiritual work*, with which it rises above the world, time, want, transitoriness, and weakness. He teaches *work*, with which it releases its heart. He teaches it not to cling to earth. He preaches *work*, through which it keeps its soul elastic in reactions against evil, keeps it vigorous and strong also in sorrow. He preaches *work*, with which man can enlarge his soul in endeavour, longing, and strife. This *work* is prayer. We are to pray so as to rise in our soul, to glorify, bless, and beg the Lord and confess to Him. As the eagle drinks in the sunshine so shall we fill ourselves with divine ideas and enthusiasm. Elevation is the psalm, the impulse, the hymn. Let us talk our affairs over with the Lord, let us question Him and await His answers: "*Loquere, Domine.*"

(*b*) And, as He prayed, His countenance was altered; He was clothed in light and fire and He felt the joys and consolations of God. We become transfigured by divine ideas and feelings—"*species altera.*" We become different, better men. The mistrusting, dismayed, earthly man becomes a divine being. The weak one will have strength and the disheartened a soul. With soul he conquers the flesh and the world, evil and temptation. Only such misery conquers to which we oppose no soul; suffering diffused with spirit is not ugly and does not kill; all the more devastating is the one which lacks spirit. A heart capable of opening and speaking with such feeling to God that it continually longs for the better and thwarts evil in himself, verily walks the slopes of Mount Tabor and enjoys the attachments of God. "*Multaberis in virum alienum*"; thou wilt be transfigured—the soul encourages—transfigured to a different man. Longing expands, love dissolves, and discipline reshapes the soul. Let us therefore strive to transfigure our soul, let us awake the appropriate feelings in ourselves. Do not let us wait till the stream carries us away; let us descend to the depths. Let us practise ejaculatory prayers. Let us awake our longings and supplications with the words of Holy Scripture!

JESUS HEALS THE DUMB. I

"*And coming to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes disputing with them. And presently all the people seeing Jesus, were astonished and struck with fear: and running to him, they saluted him.*" (*Mark* ix. 13.)

(*a*) Up on the mountain Jesus is transfigured in the force of the soul, and imbues His disciples with sweetness, with remoteness from the world. Meanwhile, down below, weak faith disputes. And Jesus asked the Scribes: "What question ye with them?" And one of the multitude answered and said: "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which has a dumb spirit . . . and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not." Thy strength ought to be in Thy disciples, ought it not? But it is not, and instead of it there is rivalry and questioning. Let us not dispute and question, but enter the world with the spirit of Christ. Let us recall His memory with our individuality and not merely by our words. How very attractive this Christ is! The people abandon the dispute; they look upon Him with deep reverence, they run to Him and salute Him. Behold the strength of soul in the traits of Jesus!

(*b*) The father of the sick child begs: "*If thou canst do any thing, help us, having compassion on us. And Jesus saith to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*" Whether miracle accompanies it, or whether the Lord directs us to the ways of patience, faith is always a vital force. It is by faith that we rise from out of the mechanism of the world. We know that God is in us, and that in the moral order He does not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength. We are imbued with courage and trust, and in the struggles of life we do not tear the ropes of patience. This strength will stream forth upon our surroundings and with it we will change "our world." Do not let us continually refer to circumstances and surroundings and the difficulties of them, but let us forcibly assert the soul, assert "our world." Let us believe and trust. There is light and warmth in that. Strength will pour forth from us.

(*c*) In society also "*all things are possible to him that believeth.*" Let us firmly believe that evil cannot conquer and that the Kingdom of God spreads and gains ground not only in the inner world but in the outer one also. It is true that this involves strife, and the clashing of interests involves bitterness. In every age different balances have to be created in economic circumstances, but let us keep our aim before our eyes, according to which the whole world is meant for the development of more good men, and that more valuable, better men should be formed. Do not let us look too gloomily upon the world, upon the feud between classes. We see that in spite of everything we are achieving more; the state of the working-classes and its way of living is improving; a more reasonable public spirit possesses us; love, mercy and charity are livelier. Distrust and despair have no place in the Gospel, which speaks of the Kingdom of God. Let us work for a better world, a better man, a more valuable one. Do not let us be angry with one or another class of society. "All things are possible to him that believeth."

(*d*) How are we to serve this great aim? In the question the answer is contained: *with service.* Not with general phrases about people and country; not with sentimental humanism, but with faith, with belief, backed by reverential, devoted, serving love. Let us place ethics in business, in economics, so that we be not selfish, unjust, and extortionate. Let us lighten the work of man, and encourage honesty, faithfulness, and reliability. These qualities are paid for, yet we always seek for them, for in business we ask first about moral qualities; we ask whether the man we are interested in is a worthy, good, reliable man. Therefore we have to wish for as much morality as possible, in the world, that is, we wish for more and more good, correct, strong, honest will.

JESUS HEALS THE DUMB. II

“*He threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him: Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee, go out of him . . . and he went out of him.*” (*Mark* ix. 24.)

(*a*) On Mount Tabor the glorious Christ celebrates the feast of the soul, which creates heaven on earth and brings down the Saints, Moses, and Elias amongst us; whereas down below feebleness of soul and misery of the body torments men; the soul is suffocated, the spirit darkens. We feel both. The contrast is enormous. But who is to help the world which struggles in the depths? Behold the Apostles standing there: they shrug their shoulders, they cannot cope with the misery, although they are the disciples of Christ. This is how it is with us. We are faced with dark powers and forces. We too are pupils of Christ and we cannot cope with them. We are humiliated and we suffer. Then comes the command of Jesus: “Dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him,” and by this we conquer. Let us always be convinced that we have to suffer much. We cannot alter this; but we do not therefore renounce the good, and in this our humility also God belongs to us and is ours.

(*b*) “*And when he was come into the house, his disciples secretly asked him: Why could we not cast him out? And he said to them: This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting.*” The sword is rusty, it is unfit for victorious strifes. Weak is the soul, therefore it cannot sufficiently assert the force of God in the world. Two things are wanted: prayer to God, so that we might be filled with Him, and self-denial and fasting so that we can be free from ourselves and the world. It is upon this way that those walked who did great spiritual things. The opposite way was taken by those who compromised the divine upon earth. Let prayers and fasting make us worthy fighters for God.

(*c*) Many good priests are wanted. Our age abstracts many hearts from God and stifles many souls in materialism. Let us pray and fast on Ember days that good priests may be created. Let us suffer for this. St. Stephen the martyr has procured St. Paul for the world, and St. Alphonso Rodriguez gave us St. Peter Claver. Why have we not more holy priests ? The Lord answers this question thus : "Because ye do not beg for it sufficiently."

"UNLESS YOU BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN"

"*At that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying : Who . . . is the greater in the kingdom of heaven ? And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them. Whom when he had embraced he saith to them : Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (*Matt.* xviii. 1 ; *Mark* ix. 35.)

(*a*) Oh, men, you are filled with fog and imagination and sensitiveness, and there is little of truth and solid virtue in you. Your subjective stupidity renders you deformed, and your vanity makes you ailing. No one shall touch your self-love or else ye cease to serve the most holy interests. If your good intentions are criticized, ye are liable to forget God, for ye seek your own selves.

Ye are further filled with darkness, mire, and earth; the smell of decay is upon your robes and the sadness of the graves upon your being. Ye work for archæology. Contrary to this, Jesus wishes for a purified, noble-minded, superior soul, which has washed the mire out of itself and stands above petty subjectivity. He wishes for a transparent, beautiful, strong, free soul. We must fight against sensitiveness and against the many hidden ways of vanity which appear in us as antipathy and estrangement towards our neighbour. *Pro libertate!*

(*b*) "*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child . . . And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the bottom of the sea.*" Jesus sees the beautiful soul of the little child in which God resides, sees its transparency, sees that "*limpidezza*" which has not yet been overclouded by mist, fog, and stench . . . the heavy mist of care is not upon it, nor the slave-like state of labour. And He embraces the little child, He becomes its panegyrist and identifies Himself with it. How much He loves souls! But at the same time, at seeing the destruction of these heavens, of these pure souls, He expresses His alarm and terrible anger: Woe to those who destroy a pure soul; woe to the monster which sucks the blood of the soul and turns it into a corpse! The curse of such a deed draws such ones down, like a millstone, into the depths of God-forsakenness! The soul is a treasure, we also are such, but if we poison a soul we are objects of loathing and dregs. How can we look Jesus in the eyes? Can we bear the contradiction which exists between His love for souls and our destruction of them? Jesus is the sun and we would then be corpses rotting below a millstone in a dark abyss. Oh, never let us be the cause of anyone becoming coarse, of his decadence, his unbelief, and distortion. Never, never, will we be a thorn in anyone's eyes. Never will our behaviour cool anyone's love and ardour.

(*c*) "*Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come. . . . And if thy hand, or thy foot, scandalize thee, cut it off. . . . And if thine eye scandalize thee, pluck it out.*" Behold the cry of pain of the soul of Jesus! His heart is heavy for that world which extinguishes the soul and eternal life; heavy for the dark, sad music which renders souls sorrowful in their love of the flesh and the earth. True that this power will assert itself, yet still it is fatal to be pioneer, outrider, and courier of fate. Jesus educates a different generation contrary to this sorrowful necessity; a generation in which the soul is not for sale for any price. What is the use of nimble feet, if they dance to hell? Of beautiful eyes, if they extinguish our light? Only he can be deemed magnanimous and prudent who can do without dance, embrace, bright eyes, so far as these are against virtue, for the sake of the most beautiful, for eternal beauty and love. He is capable of this because He loves intensely and fervently. This is how we also wish to love! It is with this sense that we handle the souls of others. We do not say: it is in vain, all belongs to the devil, but we act as such who wish to draw away everything from the power of the devil.

TRUE CHILDHOOD

"*Unless you . . . become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (*Matt.* xviii. 3.)

(*a*) There are two kinds of naïveté: the naïveté of *feeling*, and that of *knowledge*. The naïveté of knowledge is no advantage and no virtue, and with all our endeavour we see to it that we rise above the ignorance of childhood with as complete, as rich, and as true knowledge as possible. According to St. Paul: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child . . . But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child." (1 *Cor*. xiii. 11.) But a naïve disposition, a simple, unpretentious, straight, true feeling, we have to tend and cherish. This is what Christ teaches us when for example, He washes the feet of His disciples. We are not to be children in that we stand on a low grade of knowledge, but in that we show the brightest knowledge and ready homage for the Lord and His holy will.

(*b*) What is more, filial feeling is the innocence of life and the unpretentiousness of ready love. Again, it is St. Paul who says: "Brethren, do not become children in sense; but *in malice* be children and in sense be perfect." (1 *Cor*. xiv. 20.) The will of the Lord Jesus is to lift us continually to a higher and higher grade of spiritual life and to educate us to be free souls in spirit. We thirst for the spirit of eternal love and beautiful freedom; we wish to be purified.

(*c*) Filial, childlike feeling is at the same time also trust. We look upon God and the holy dusk of our future and eternal goal with childlike eyes. We run through dark rooms into the arms of our Father . . . we run into Church as the children playing in the square before the Church, run up to the steps of the Altar, speak to our Jesus, and throw Him a kiss. Darkness does not swallow up the rays of trust of the childlike soul.

THE CHURCH TEACHES TRUE CHILDHOOD

"*Unless you . . . become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,*" namely, if ye do not possess a trusting soul, attached to Me, which finds its joy in Me, ye will not find your happiness!

(*a*) Everything in the Church trains us to this: Jesus assures us that He is with us and does not forget us and in this holy secret of unforgettable promise, in the Holy Eucharist, He continually draws our hearts to Him. There the motherly soul, the charm of beauty, surround us and the eyes of the Holy Virgin rest upon us, eyes so often mentioned: "*Illos tuos misericordes oculos.*" Our soul cannot be indifferent, dark, and dreary; the trust in our prayers, gentleness in our art and feeling, in our songs, betray the child's soul, voice, and look. . . . Oh, how good it is for us to be here . . . here in the paternal house . . . here in the home of God.

(*b*) Children are we, but not soft, weeping puppets, we are shepherd-boys who do not want a sword and pike but who have a sling and five sharp stones: the five letters of the name of Jesus and the infinite trust they give us for vanquishing the enemy: sin, passion, intrigue, hate, poverty, illness, and death. Man groans beneath these forces. He often comes upon victorious evil and nearly loses spirit. In the world he experiences the self-forgetfulness and meanness which sinks to baseness; the tormenting misunderstanding, inextinguishable hate, and the alarming shadows of illness and death. He sees how life fades and would fade even if every meadow were an elysium and every isle a wonder island. And yet he knows that not evil but good conquers; that the soul conquers the decaying body and that life lives beyond the grave; he knows that the soul conquers all, conquers prison, suffering, death, bondage, hate . . . that it conquers as it conquered in the Holy Virgin, in SS. Francis, Agnes, Perpetua, Catherine, that it conquers if it undauntably believes and lovingly and trustingly embraces Jesus. Oh, children of God, ye wonders of God, your eyes are capable of looking into heaven without being overclouded, your child-face smiles even in the breath of death, your child-hands handle the sling and knock Goliaths down. . . . *Venerande puer, fortitudo Dei*: Venerable child, thou strength of God.

(*c*) Such a soul finds joy. Joy comes from victory. *Gaudete in Domino semper . . . Exultent et lætentur in te! . . .* God wishes that we should serve Him with joy: *Jubilate Deo, servite Domino in lætitia*, and that we should feel and experience that "*melior est dies una in atriis tuis super milia*"; better a day with Thee than elsewhere a whole life. Do not let us be quarrelsome, dejected, suspicious souls. That spoils all: disposition, belief, artistic creation, and life itself; it darkens the eye, our words and looks. It does not glorify God. The dejected, joyless soul has no perseverance, for it has no strength: "the sorrow of the heart defeats the soul." The dejected man's heart, hand, and arm are of lead and his soul is the hot-bed of suffering. It is joy which made St. Francis sing: "*tanto e il ben, ch'io aspetto, che ogni pen mi par diletto.*" Let us therefore live the "happy life" in the attachment to God and in ready service.

GOD'S ANGEL ACCOMPANIES US

"See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven!" (*Matt.* xviii. 10.)

(*a*) We are not lonely and forsaken; the angel of God walks with us. "*Angeli eorum*," our angel. We would like to speak with him, to look in his eyes, to embrace him, but we can only approach him in spirit, for he is in an "other world" than ours, of which we only feel the breeze, as Columbus felt the scent of the sassafras tree on the ocean. We believe that we have a guardian angel, for there is a spiritual world which we cannot deny. The fish shall not say: there is no life beyond that of water; the beast shall not say: there is none beyond that of the air. There is life beyond the great world, above the æther, "*in lumine tuo*"; there is an invisible, spiritual world, there are eyes needed for it, eyes of the spirit and the soul. We believe it and rejoice in it. We cannot embrace and clasp it, but we understand and love it.

(*b*) How are we to approach this invisible, spiritual world? With love and reverence. We reverence it as great, sublime spirit. We know that in it the force of the spirit is freed from the guardianship of the senses and it shines and glitters, whereas our mind—be it even as that of Leibniz or Kant—is a captive, a prisoner, which builds its houses from ideas and its bridges from analogies with which it wants to bridge dark, undiscoverable depths. Whereas the mind of the spirit is intuitive, its knowledge is bright sunlight. Thy wisdom, O king, is as the wisdom of angels; David is told this. And this wisdom draws and carries upwards, not downwards.

The clods of malignant, intriguing, base passions are not chained to its feet. It is loving wisdom! Those souls are united with God and filled with grace. Such a pure spirit, a sublime one filled with grace, stands beside us and goes with us! How highly have we to reverence and value it and to glow with enthusiasm for it! We have to render ourselves worthy of such company. Angelic proximity . . . what a mighty motive this is for every good!

We have further to have ardent love for the angelic; for these angels are strong, brave spirits bringing victory at the head of armies, as in the battles of Macchabeus. They are bountiful, merciful, gracious spirits, "the angels of peace, consolation and mercy." They are beautiful, they are sublime. In the hierarchy of existence they mediate the graces of God; they lead us, take care of us, and encourage us. "I send my angel before thee"; love him and trust in him, says the Lord. Clemens Brentano wrote a beautiful poem about Louise Hensel under the title of "The Angel of the Desert"; this angelic soul led him back to faith, out of the desert to the sources of life. We do not walk in a desert if we listen to the words of angels and if we lovingly ask: what dost thou wish of me, thou victorious, sublime, heroic spirit? Thou wishest me not to grow faint-hearted, not to waver and be afraid, but to love and trust and to call the name of our God for help and for His grace.

PARABLE OF THE CRUEL SERVANT. I

"*Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him, that owed him ten thousand talents.*" (*Matt.* xviii. 23.)

(*a*) Everyone is in debt to the life- and bliss-giving God. It is from Him we receive all the good in creation just as in redemption, and we can abuse everything. We commit sins. We abuse the words of Christ, His blood, His grace, His treasures; we oppose God and virtue; we live through conflicts which make our heart bleed; we groan in battles which make us grow weary. The Sublimity approaches me to settle accounts, He who excelled so in creation; He the joy of existence and its completeness, the infinite "*jubilus*" of strength and perfection. Oh, what has become of the strength and life in me? What of grace and beauty? The destitute, miserable pariah has ten thousand talents of debts! He writhes without merits, law, ability, without active and asserting force. Here there is only place for "*indulgentia*" and "*remissio*," place for pardon and remission of sins. If the Sublimity lets me off, then good, if not, I am unable to pay. Therefore I beg the Lord: "Forgive me, let me off"; this is what we pray for, when we confess; this is what we beg for: "Remit my punishment, my Lord." This is our object when we wish to gain indulgences.

(*b*) "*But that servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.*" This is our attitude towards the infinite Lord, every confession of ours, the more conscious moments of our zeal, our approach to God, and, above all, the hour of our death, urge us to adopt this attitude. I fall on my knees and with the longing for eternal life, and the ardour of my soul which adores the eternally Sublime and encircles His beauty, I beg Him to act, for only He can do so. I cannot do else but beg and repent and hope; but this I do with the resolution and undaunted trust of my soul. God help me that it be so! What great forces are humiliation, trust, repentance, and hope!

(*c*) "*And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt.*" The humility of repentance is followed by exaltation, that of kneeling down, by sweet embrace; the dark brooding of the care of salvation is exchanged for the kiss of compassionate love. On the brink of hell the thorn-crowned Jesus appears. He raises us and encourages. "Come to me," He says, "do not doubt." I wipe out the doubt and misgiving from thy soul. I disperse the shadow of anguish from thy brow. Come, come, I replace sin by grace, my strength relieves thy helplessness and my love thy apostasy. Come, it is I who forgive thee! I know thy ruin! Thou didst become a pessimist. Thy philosophy also announces that man is vile; thy science declares that man wears the signs of beastliness; I also see an immense debt upon thee. Thy action opposes the moral law; thou didst break away from the Holy God, and thy moral existence was hazardous. But I forgive thee! Behold the new creation of God in the moral order! Behold the merciful power!

(*d*) But this does not affect us as mirage and enchantment; it causes a deep fluctuation of the soul. Soul ferments and rises here, bliss comes to it, and the soul grasps it fervently. The breath of the heights and reviving of the moral world touches it; the beauty and charm of moral purity extricate themselves, and two feelings possess the soul: it feels its own misery and also the helping, saving power of God. God comes and revives me and I revive. Oh, do not let us doubt God and His mercy, for by so doing we would offend Him! Our undaunted trust will give us strength and heighten our ardour and raise our attachment to passion.

(*e*) The gracious acceptance of this sin-forgiving grace changes life; the wall of partition twixt God and man crumbles down and divine forces stream towards us and into us. We will partake of the strength of Christ, of His reign and glory. We become delivered from the embarrassment of our faint-heartedness, mistrust and small faith, and we go forward bravely. Christ gave Himself and His grace to us; we became relieved and strong. We bravely act and continue to further the work of Christ in ourselves and in others.

PARABLE OF THE CRUEL SERVANT. II

"*But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow servants that owed him an hundred pence: and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison. . .*" (*Matt.* xviii. 28.)

(*a*) The servant having gone out to his fellow-servants, having descended from the heights of the Sublime Lord into the region of low feelings where servant and pedlar-souls torment each other, he became cruel, and forgot mercy. Behold the earthiness of the low soul! The soul of Jesus approaches us with the sublimity of the greatest vocation, with the blessing of divine feelings. In His soul the anxiety of the danger of eternal death and the longing of imparting eternal life became a passion. He comes to remove the curse, to unlock the gates of hell, to remit interminable debts. He comes to disperse the darkest worries of life. He comes with strength and power. He comes to us with outpouring soul, with the fire of Pentecost in His eyes, with the honey of Christmas-night upon His lips, He comes to us with the ardour of the Incarnation in His heart; He brought tears, mercy, compassion, purity, strength, and immortality, and servant-man forgets all this and for a hundred pence he tries to strangle, embitters, persecutes, kills . . . and plunges into hell! That is the child of God, this one is the servile type!

(*b*) "*Now his fellow servants seeing what was done, were very much grieved.*" Those fellow-servants who have not become beast-like by cruel selfishness, those are sorry; the world is their anguish, that low, creeping, snake-world. They fight against it, they work and strive and weep, but God does not wish them to languish, to pass from the heights of the eagles to the tracks of snakes. Let them go confidently after Christ, even if they have tears in their eyes. Let them go and assert His strength and exercise the power of love as far as they are able. Let them frame the disharmony of life into songs and hymns. Let them pour out their souls. The rays and outpourings of the soul are truth, sanctity, beauty, strength, joy and life. Let them render the world beautiful; and carry the Christly light which makes the fairy-stories pale, into their huts amongst their rags. Let them spread poetry over the view, meadow, barn and rotten garden-fence, poetry over the bushes. May the enthusiasm of life accompany them in the streets and corridors, in saloons, in attics and basements, and in the midst of their sorrow let them not forget that in reality they are the wine-inspired lords of life and existence! This is not philosophy, but Christianity.

(*c*) "*Then his lord called him: and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?*" Oh, who can bear this accusation? How the Lord has given and forgiven us! How the blood of Christ with which He wiped off my sins burns upon my soul! How His words pierce my heart "sharper than a sword with double blades"! What treasures have slipped through our hands, as if they had been grains of sand! Or perhaps the eternal loss of souls also casts its shadow upon us and behold "I forgave thee all that debt" and thou deceitful, dark, cold soul, thou induceth thy soul not to forgive others but to be cruel with them? Oh, men, this is baseness indeed; its track is the way to hell! Love therefore and be merciful, as I love and am compassionate. Do not have a heavy heart of stone, but forgive offence and meanness!

THE SENDING OF THE DISCIPLES

"*And after these things the Lord appointed also other seventy-two: and he sent them two and two before his face . . . and he said to them: The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few.*" (*Luke* x. 1.)

(*a*) The fields grow yellow, the harvest is great. In spirit Jesus looks at the world. He looks into its misery, into the darkness of its sins and sufferings; He experiences its troubles vividly; He wishes to help with a sympathising, generous heart, therefore He tells us what we are in greatest need of: Beg God to send you apostolic men. He also indicates what they are to be like: pure-minded, without violence and interest, they are not to be tainted by the temperament of the rapacious, cruel, selfish world. They are to be barefooted, peaceful men, out of whom the soul radiates; who have only one fact for the world, and that is that it should receive the peace which they give and return them bread for it. Christianity originates from the soul of Jesus; its spreading and upholding also needs "congenial" men whose soul is like the soul of Jesus. Let us view this Christ-type; let us look into its crystal-depths; may this soul also fill us; if we possess it, then let us look trustingly at the great harvest and whisper to ourselves: God sends us, His soul urges us on; we go.

(*b*) "*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send labourers into his harvest.*" Pray ye for such labourers. "Congenial" souls, in spiritual relation with Christ, have to be prayed and begged for. In the Holy Church the Apostolic succession will exist according to the law, but the law is only an iron wire, from which no wreath can be made; flowers and morality are wanted for it. Law is a layer of rock, from which no beautiful world will arise; that needs pines, forests, moss, lawns, meadows; therefore let us pray and beg for them. Sometimes something of this genius appears amongst us and transports us. We can well imagine that, if this type does not come to us darkly, one-sidedly, with the passivity of Tolstoi, or in the mist of Ibsen; but if it comes to us in the original beauty of "the Son-of-Man," how truly it will conquer our heart! Our Saints are variations of this Type. Let us beg and pray for Apostles and Saints, and not only beg for them but educate such. Maybe, if we educate our children for Christ, Christ-like resemblance will appear in them!

(*c*) Labourers are wanted to create a new world. We need hard-working and vividly perceptive souls. Work is needed; rocks have to be pierced, stones to be quarried, harvest has to come and has to be reaped. The Apostles have not to sit in offices and await those who inquire; this is quite a secondary function. Fiery rain comes down upon the Apostolic men from the censer of the apocalyptic Angel. They have no rest; their soul expands, their eyes see, their face glows, and their hearts speak. The fire of love and the shadow of care characterize their frame of mind. Children, ailing ones, those who scandalize, those who are in peril, sinners, good souls, school, family, the thousand needs of society swarm before their eyes. They trust, pray, suffer, and persevere.

THE COMMAND OF LOVE. I

"*And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting him; and saying: Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But he said to him: What is written in the law? . . . He answering, said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said to him: Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*" (*Luke* x. 25.)

(*a*) Let us love God, our Sublime, Infinite, Sweet All; that eternal, great good which reveals itself continually more and more; "*omne esse*," this swelling ocean of life and existence; this warm, happy eternal life out of which souls spring forth as well as intuitions and inspirations and the joys of ecstasy; out of whom the visions of the spirit and the inspirations of art arise, who charms souls and pours rhythm and harmony upon existence. Let us love this most real beauty which is poetry as well as reality; this productive force which sets the stars in motion, which fills our heart with lofty, sweet feeling. Let us love Him, Him from whom comes material joy; through whom children are born and flowers blossom; who inspires every motive of the song of happiness, who drops milk, honey, and wine upon the lips of lovers, poets, prophets and Samaritans; who brings tears to the eyes and inspires the thrush-songs of quiet joys; who mingles tears of emotion with suffering and also works with dusk and darkness forming the better, more beautiful life. Let us love Him, Our Lord and our All, who willed us to exist, who wishes us to be better, more beautiful, stronger, fuller, richer souls; who draws us on and opens the flood-gates of His graces and educates our soul continually to a more beautiful, more conscious spring of life. We have to love Him with heart and strength . . . and is it possible to love Him without feeling, emotion, and passion? Who does not love Him passionately has not yet looked into His face!

(*b*) "*Thou shalt love the Lord . . .*" This is the first command of His, not that we should believe, hope, be afraid and expect reward. Thou shalt love, not anyhow, but passionately. Long, start, fly towards Him, thy heart shall leap for Him; enfold Him, embrace Him, encircle Him in your arms. This command stands first, for love is the most perfect, most moral, most fine and noble will and feeling; I myself have decided that I give myself over to Him with my entire being; what else could suit Him and me better? It is pure morality; it fills the heart. It is also *first*, because God, the soul of life and perfection, wishes this above all; He is jealous of the first fruits of our love. It is the *first* command also because it is the sweetest; its element is joy. We may find joy in the obedience, reverence, and glory which we give God, but the sweetest joy is in love! With this we are indeed able to progress, to persevere, to strive and make sacrifices. With this love we are able to surrender; it serves and is good for everything, it conquers all and is capable of everything!

(*c*) "*But he willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering, said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way; and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite . . . But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him: and seeing him, was moved with compassion. And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine: and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. . . . Which of these three in thy opinion was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers? But he said: He that shewed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner.*" (*Luke* x. 29.) First those pass the suffering man whose compassion is restricted and who have not the feeling in common with him, because they are strangers. Priests and Levites hurry perhaps to church or may be have no time because of important public affairs; suffice it to say that he who lies by the wayside is not their brother; they are not moved, and the sight of him does not affect them; in a word, they are strangers. But the Samaritan comes, and "has compassion," and offers his services. He approaches him spiritually and shows that he is concerned at the sight of the wounded man. This is that "*proximus*," the real brother, who is a friend and not only gives, but does; who puts himself in a loving, helping state towards the sufferer and pours the strength of his soul upon him.

THE COMMAND OF LOVE. II

"*Love the Lord thy God.*"

(*a*) With all thy mind; think of Him, search for Him, become absorbed in Him, contemplate Him. With all thy soul: thy disposition is able to become immersed, to sing, to shape; it is able to inspire and enjoy; turn to Him with all thy soul. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with thy heart which beats and throbs blood, and spreads bounteous warmth and vital strength; love Him like this and with all thy strength, with the strength and organs of life, with the eyes, ears, lips, and tongue. Love shall be the inspiration of thy heart, thy soul, thy mind; this shall be the element of thy life. Without this the idea is a mere shadow; it is a pale, colourless, feeble impetus which does not reach to God. Without love the "*anima*" has no value, it sees not, does not notice anything and reacts not; and the heart, though it throbs, is like the weed of the swamp.

(*b*) Love . . . love bravely; have no fear of being disrespectful. The objection against some statues of Our Lady is that the Infant is too closely joined to the breast of its mother and that "its intimate nestling spoils the hieratic appearance." Indeed, theoretically, we object to the anthropomorphistic representation of the "*Dominus*

Deus," which views God as man, but in feeling God is nearer to us than any man. The intimate union and the fusion of God with what is human and the conversion of doctrines into warm life will always be the chief aim of the Gospel! Our soul is poured over the Lord; we do not shrink because of His being Lord; our soul is poured upon its God; that He is God does not make us stiff! We love and love indeed; hieratic stiffness dissolves. The child clings to its mother, even if she be a queen; it would be strange if love were to decrease because of kingship. We comprehend this indeed; we take our feelings seriously, we become more serious in our love; but the "*Dominus Deus*" does not frighten us.

(*c*) Let us love the Lord; He is sublime and high, but not unsociable, for He is full of sunshine. He is deep and abysmal, but life throbs from this depth, and warm blood gushes forth. He is strong and stormy, but He holds flowers in His hands, scatters scent, and sings. He is mysteriously dumb, but becomes loud in the soul; He teaches us psalms, hymns, and the *Gloria;* He terminates even the "*De profundis*" on a note of encouragement. His eyes are as black as night, but beautiful; the fire of eternal love glitters in this darkness. His visage is veiled, but nature is His mirror and everything symbolizes Him. He bears and educates. He gives joy and enthusiasm to our soul; He is good and true; He stretches out His hands towards us across transitoriness as across a ditch; we spring towards Him, for He raises us. He does not guard us from strife, but continually whispers: Thou art my child, and if thou weepest come to me and cry upon my heart. Oh, our God, our All!

MARY HAS CHOSEN THE BETTER PART

" *Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town : and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet heard his word.*" (*Luke* x. 38.)

(*a*) Martha, the busy one who succeeds in the practical line, receives Jesus into her house and even in His presence she is unable to do else but work. She is busy, she has much to do. Whereas Mary does not work now, but sits at Jesus' feet and opens her soul to Him! She has been working and will work again later ; but now she adores, loves, glows, and enjoys ; she is happy. In Martha the faulty one-sidedness of life reveals itself which only urges work and work again—which honours strength and perseverance, but which neglects the inner world, the reviving of the soul, the depth of consciousness, its beauty and freshness, neglects the purifying and refreshing of disposition. This is not right ; Martha should also sit down while the Master is there ; she should be absorbed in His soul ; she has time for work afterwards. Neither strength and talent nor production and work can be the content of life. Not on these but on the direction of endeavour and the form which our inner world takes upon itself everything depends, and everything depends on whether we are true to the holy, perfect principles and how we live up to them. Therefore the first requirement of life is content, consciousness, faithfulness, and ardour ; no one is allowed to neglect these but has to devote time, strength, and interest to them.

(*b*) " *But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood* *and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her therefore, that she help me.*" This exaggerated, one-sided work renders man irritable, plaintive, dissatisfied, and unjust. Work becomes a yoke and burden which crushes, not a vocation and a duty which ravishes. We would like to shake this yoke off and look enviously and askance at those who work less. Nowadays work is verily a burden which weighs terribly upon humanity; it has become a yoke of constraint and we serve it. Do not let us allow our soul to become embittered and deformed by work; let us put our soul in our work and our noble motives and goodwill. This is the oil upon the grating wheels. Let us work for God and man from vocation and do not let us complain, but at the same time let us do our best to see that the present graceless state of labour gives place to a better social order.

(*c*) *And the Lord, answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part.*" Martha, thou art busy and careth and thinketh for many things, but do not neglect thyself and do not be unjust towards others. "One thing is needful"; needful and necessary is the frame of mind which is united with God and lives from Him. God shall be thy soul, thy life, and the centre of thy endeavours, and all thy work and endeavour shall be a harmonious outline of this centre; then there will be symmetry, harmony, peace, and happiness in thee. It is then that thou provest that "thou dost not produce more goods but more happiness." Therefore "one thing is needful" and that is a pure, beautiful, noble soul which loves God. Who chooses this has chosen the best part and this is the only rational, logical procedure. Those who neglect the soul and themselves carry disunion in themselves; their fate is darkness, bitterness, and emptiness. But this does not mean that we should retire, and hide in seclusion; let us remain at our profession and in all our work keep an eye on the " one thing which is needful."

CHRIST AND THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

" *And the scribes and Pharisees bring unto him a woman taken in adultery; and they set her in the midst, and said to him: Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou? And this they said, tempting him, that they might accuse him. But Jesus bowing himself down, wrote with his finger on the ground.*" (*John* viii. 3.)

(*a*) Before Christ stand the adulteress who feels that she has fallen, and her deceitful persecutors, the executors of the law, but these have not come here because of the sanctity of the law, but to ensnare Jesus. Jesus wished to deepen the feeling of morality; He wished that every sinner should first feel his own sin; that with the loathing of sin and the hatred which we feel first towards ourselves we should start out to improve and save others. Blessing only rests upon such a mentality. Let us therefore go into the depths, into ourselves; let us become pure, then we can affect others.

(*b*) " *When therefore they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her.*" This does not mean that sin has not to be punished; this would lead to moral enervation. Jesus does not here adopt a legal attitude, but deals with the souls of the deceitful men who stand before Him. He sees through their guile. He sees that they do not serve morality, but want to ensnare Him. How good it is to bring such people to the consciousness of that sinfulness which they want to have punished in others. The woman is a sinner, but they also are deceitful. Let us purify the good intention so that base, selfish, sensual, ignoble elements do not mingle with it.

(*c*) "*But they hearing this went out one by one . . . and Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus lifting up himself, said to her: Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more.*" They went away, they felt that Jesus saw through their deceitfulness. Jesus and the sinner are left alone. This is as it should be: street, noise, and passion have no place here. "I do not condemn thee," says the Lord—I do not crush thy individuality, live and grow better. I loathe sin, but I wish thee good. Make good thy sins; live purely. This is how "*misericordia*" speaks to "*miseria.*" To despise and loathe sin, but to wish the sinner good, is the great thing.

CHRIST'S WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

"*Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me?*" (*John* viii. 46.)

(*a*) The humble Jesus who rejects every homage, who hurries to the mountain when they wish to proclaim Him king, who has forbidden those whom He cured to go and tell others, presents Himself here in the greatest sublimity and moral dignity and demands that everyone should acknowledge that He is holy and without sin. This is the greatest sublimity. How nobly Jesus stands out from the poor, sinful world which is full of the lusts of the flesh and eyes and of the haughtiness of life! But this sublimity is the due of the Son of God, who came to take away our sins. What crystal depths open in those pure souls which are filled with God, peace, and joy. Compared with these, genius, power, and riches are mere formalities, which do not render life happy and sweet. Let us endeavour to achieve real purity of heart, that God may not reprove us with our sin. The world may not do so, but that is not sufficient.

(*b*) "*He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.*" Behold the great empirical fact: who is of God, is drawn to Him, has a sense for Him and speaks with Him; who is not of Him is a stranger to Him; but his being a stranger is his own fault. God gives Himself to everybody; with His grace He precedes, enlightens, and attracts souls; if He did not do so no one could go to Him. But the trouble is that we either refuse the grace of the Lord, or do not collaborate with it. O Lord, how much we spoil Thy work! How have we treated Thy grace and Thy enlightenments? How do we still treat Thy promptings? We pray that our mind and soul should become finer concerning God. What wonderful feelings the 119th Psalm shows us about this. "With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

(*c*) "*Jesus answered . . . I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever.*" Of you I do not seek glory. What could I get from men who do not comprehend God, soul, world, and life? Yet ye think highly of your opinions, and ye criticize, abuse, and condemn. Contrasted with all this there is one single criterion which I establish: with Me only such words and speech are of any account which pursue death and give life. Ye blame and criticize; but from this no one will be better, more holy and trusting. Whereas if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death; the morality of such a one who keeps My word, keeps My saying, is founded on God, his heart is warm, his strength does not run short, and his soul stands in eternal spring. This verdict is not a word but a fact. This is our experience; why should we dispute? Rather let us live.

HEALING OF THE MAN BORN BLIND

"*And Jesus passing by, saw a man who was blind from his birth; and his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*" (*John* ix. 1.)

(*a*) Troubles are not only punishments. To see sin behind every trouble is a superficial, bad theology. We are finite, that is, we are limited in everything, therefore in our life-energy also. Our individual organism and our social life are complexes of innumerable forces, in which mistakes easily happen and appear as troubles and suffering.

We are placed into the mechanism of the world, and the development of the world proceeds upon the way of blind force. There is providence, but this does not save us from need, suffering, and mistakes. Do not let us therefore sniff sin everywhere we have to suffer, but let us see to it that "the works of God should be made manifest" in us: in our trust, in our patience, and prudent, moderate behaviour. The book of Job says that one does not only suffer for ungodliness but also for other reasons, and likewise it says that the wicked are often lucky in this world, being reserved for the day of vengeance. Let us wish to glorify the Lord. We do not remonstrate with Him, but endure what He metes out to us upon earth, be it sunshine or night. May the Lord not withhold eternal light from us after death.

(*b*) "*He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes. And said to him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloe. . . . He went therefore, and washed, and he came seeing.*" The beggar sat on the roadside and begged; many gave something to him; Jesus did not give money to him but He gave his soul strength and sunshine; He gave life and by this freed him also from begging. This is His way: He helps to life; He places us on our feet; He helps us to get on by ourselves. Oh, what a divine gift! It helps us to belief, trust, and bravery. In this respect we all are in want of Jesus' alms. We need great courage to emerge victorious from life's struggles and temptations, and we are not so much in want of alms as good friends. This is how we also have to help the poor: let us help them to trust; let us console them and lift them up.

(*c*) "*The neighbours therefore . . . said: How were thy eyes opened? He answered: That man that is called Jesus made* *clay, and anointed my eyes . . . and I see. Now it was the sabbath when Jesus made the clay.*" Jesus called forth light with clay, whereas we suppress the divine light in us with clay, with our earthly, lowly way of thinking. What darkness there is everywhere . . . in religious souls also, who do not understand the great ideas of God and who, for instance, are scandalized because Jesus gives His love and help on the Sabbath! What a darkness it is which forgets the great, free, loving spirit of God because of empty, senseless formalities, and draws the sublime down to its own ideas, instead of raising them to it. That is why it does not recognize God and His works and disputes and becomes blind, saying: "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day," even if He loves and does miracles. O Lord, we wish to rise to Thee, and to Thy truths. Divest us of our weak, worthless understanding. Speak, O Lord, Thy servant listens: Speak, we pay Thee homage. Do not say of me also: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."

(*d*) "*Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when he had found him, he said to him: Dost thou believe in the Son of God? He answered, and said: Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? And Jesus said to him: Thou hast both seen him; and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said: I believe, Lord. And falling down he adored him.*" It is to this sight that Jesus wishes to open our eyes, that we should see Him as the Son of God. Similarly He has shown Himself to us in His sublimity, in His life, and miracles. Indeed, we too see Him, we see the most Sublime. We feel that He lifts us out of the narrow, lowly world and gives us strength. With this faith, with this belief, the wings of the soul grow. From the ethical chaos stirred up by theosophy we rise to pure, divine, strong will. Also our greatest step is falling on to our knees.

WORK WHILE IT IS DAY

"*I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.*" (*John* ix. 4.)

(*a*) Usually we see in work only the stamp of punishment, and we may do so too, for there is some truth in it. It follows us as a dark, gloomy shadow through history. But it is in work that we become like to God, who is eternal activity. Every potentiality, whether it be of the brain or muscle, is meant to spend its strength in activity; if it does not do so, it fails and becomes ruined. Work, therefore, is the necessary element of life, health, and happiness. Work is a life-developing, life-ennobling factor. Work must not kill and cripple us; but to avoid this we should perform our work with pleasure and put our soul into it. Whether we work for money or for pleasure, let us think of it thus: This is good for us, this is the fulfilment of our life. We work for God and for the fuller life!

(*b*) Let us work in keeping with our profession: whether behind the plough or in the workshop or in an academical profession. It is better for us to be intelligent, zealous labourers who work for God, than to be bunglers. It is bad when ability and talent is not in its right place, when genius struggles amidst pecuniary worries; but it is just as bad to rise through protectors and to prove no good there. Therefore vocation is needed; where God places us there we wish to prove good; for the chief point is that we should do everything well. This feeling is our sunshine! We must unite the activity of Martha with the spirit of Mary. It would be best for us to unite a high level of individual education with simple manual labour; by this many conflicts would be smoothed over, both in ourselves and in our communal life.

(*c*) We have to work conscientiously, with interest and purposefully. We ought not to undertake too many different things. "*Pauca agas, si tranquillus esse cupis*," do not let us do many kind of things, then we will be calm. Do not let us fear and shirk work; do not let us put it off for another time. "Procrastination is the thief of time." Let us use our time well, and if our hands do not work, let our soul work. Whether we are at a concert or are going for a walk, let us occupy ourselves with love and consciousness with our own self and our tasks, with God and our difficulties. Let us do this, not feverishly but diligently. Fever and excitement harass, whereas diligence soothes us.

RETURN OF THE DISCIPLES

"*And the seventy-two returned with joy, saying: Lord, the devils also are subject to us in thy name.*" (*Luke* x. 17.)

(*a*) They come with joy, with the feeling of victory and triumph. Great is their joy, for they have done great good, they have power. Misery and illness fade, the bonds of evil are loosed, and the released sufferers sing their praise. In their tracks there is peace, happiness, holy joy, and thankfulness; as if there were a pilgrimage of angels upon earth. Even their feet are beautiful, "*speciosi pedes evangelizantium*." Those whom Jesus sends walk this way; power radiates from their face; their soul is strong, they feel that even devils obey them. We also have power and vocation; we act with the strength of our soul, and where there is want and darkness and cold, there we warm and light and help.

(*b*) "*Rejoice not . . . that spirits are subject unto you: but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven.*" Do not rejoice because of your miraculous strength, but rejoice in your unity with God which manifests itself as faith, love, trust, joy, and confidence in the prospect of eternal life. The miracles are not your work, but this soul, this disposition, lift you out and place you in the stream of eternal life. Prophecy, knowledge, and power are advantageous things, but they are merely external gifts which do not render man divine. "*Non sum propheta,*" no matter; but our soul is to be filled with God. We are no savants, but we are able to love and unite ourselves to God. We do not speak angelic language, but we understand the tongue of the loving soul and it is to this that God replies.

(*c*) "*In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.*" The soul of the Lord is filled with joy at the working of the Spirit in His followers. He rejoices in the Holy Spirit, rejoices more powerfully than poets and prophets; He rejoices more passionately than the seer of Patmos. He sees a world which echoes with "the surging of many waters" and with the flapping of wings of the souls striving towards heaven. He sees culture, sees machines, art, and science; He sees the development of forces and the ascendancy of man on earth, but as if He would smile at these exertions, saying: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast created not this, but that other internal heaven, and that Thou hast guided souls thither by way of the sonship of God, humility, and sanctity. Oh, this Thy kingdom is superior, beautiful, and deep; its forces and joy cannot be compared with culture. This Thou hast created, and Thou shapest it—the excellence and blessing of Thy hand is upon it."

BLESSED ARE THE EYES THAT SEE THE THINGS WHICH YOU SEE

"*And turning to his disciples, he said: Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them.*" (*Luke* x. 23.)

Blessed are you if you see, not only with the eyes, but with the soul; not only with the mind, but with faith. Blessed are you if you see the world in divine light—if your eyes not only absorb light but can pour light upon the world, can pour the "*lumen Christi*" upon it.

(*a*) Man is the soul and heart of creation; in man creation turns into emotion and idea; through him the world receives sound, colour, and intelligence. Man has to take in its impressions; he has to make use of the oppositions of nature for developing his virtue, energy, and patience, and he can derive joy and pleasure from the beauties of the world. These are the impressions of the outer world upon the soul. On the other hand the soul has to create its own world ; it has to see God ; it has to see the ideas and love of God and dwell with delight upon His works. Its instinctive feelings about its dependence, its immortality, must, with the aid of divine revelation and the death of Christ on the Cross, build up the theological structure of faith. Behold the light which Jesus kindles in the soul, which shines from out of the soul. It is we who are the lamps of the world, our believing soul is the light of the dark earth. For we always expected light from the world, and it is just the opposite : we pour our light upon the world. O God, our sweet sun, thou shalt shine in our soul ; who looks into thee, shall see heaven ! Look out from our soul, our trusting eye is a star in the night ; it is the star of many who doubt in darkness. . . .

(*b*) Man is the centre of Nature ; he is placed in the world with his power of feeling ; in him cold and warmth, gloom and brightness, become a feeling ; just as the way of the world arouses in him humble faith in Providence—the mingled chaos of conflicting elements becomes sweet harmony. O Lord, again our heart is the source, the sweet or bitter source ; it may destroy our world with its dark, helpless pessimism, with its impatient, bitter, disunited spirit, or it may set it in order, discipline and beauty. I, I myself, am the smith of my fortune, I am he who shapes this great work which is called life.

(*c*) Some see punishment in the blows of fortune. Do they see well ? Is it true that if the crop rots, it rots because souls rot—that if it is withered it is because souls are dry ? It is true, verily true. Blows and troubles are punishment to us because we are sinful ; who feels his sin suffers his punishment in evil. Reverence is due to these fine, enlightened minds and souls. Who does not feel punishment in evil is blunt; such a one is not tortured by sin either. In our sufferings the wound of our soul shall hurt us most of all. Oh, divine, spiritual, fine feeling, where thou comest forward there there is strong life and strong reaction against sin and decay. Oh, possess us, so that spirit and life shall live in us!

COME TO ME

"*Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*" (*Matt.* xi. 28.)

(*a*) The bountiful, strong soul of Jesus streams forth in these words. This generosity of heart comes from the soul which makes its sun rise upon good and evil and which gives rain to sinners and saints. This is the noble love which narrow-minded, human truth or wickedness cannot quench. It appears to all of us, whether we be sinful or virtuous and says: Ye all labour and are all heavy laden, come unto me, I will help you. This bounty of soul is indeed a great and good power; it draws us on, it fascinates and unites us. Its vocation is to draw all of us to Himself and to unite us amongst ourselves. Who is good, does not remain alone; others attach themselves to him, and a fresh, ruddy, vigorous attraction streams forth from his soul. It is like the mountain stream, it does not get tired and does not lose strength. This is the frame of mind, the disposition, we learn from Jesus. The ideal of antique culture was the fine, many-sided education and civilisation; the ideal of Christianity is compassion which raises, and strength which turns to the low ones, the sufferers, and suppressed ones. There are many such; they have to be raised. Jesus helps all of us; He streamed forth strength and soul. His Apostles shall walk in His footsteps as the generation of the strong ones, which equally raises, helps, and renders happy.

(*b*) "*All.*" What a great undertaking it is to fulfil the claims of all of us! Especially the claim of lifting "the load of the heart." All these loads gravitate towards the Heart of Jesus, and they who feel the load are already drawn on by the Father. They seek relief, and they find it, but only in Jesus. The centre of gravity of the solar system may be an interesting point, for it is the centre of physical existence. But behold the centre of the loads of the world, it is Jesus! It is He who carries the load, "He takes away the sins of the world." This load crushes us, if we do not turn it over to Him. It is in His blood that we are refreshed.

(*c*) What trust this invitation of Jesus awakes in us, especially at our death! Lord, where are we to go, when we are torn from the world, when the whole world has become estranged from us? "Come unto me, come," Thou sayest, "and I will give you rest . . . finally and victoriously." *Veni, coronaberis!* This is indeed an invitation; happy are those who earnestly strive to merit it!

PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS

"*Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you.*" (*John* xvi. 23.)

(*a*) In distress man looks to God in his sorrows and troubles; he asks, implores and begs. Here upon earth we also ask each other for help, for we are dependent on each other. With God also we may speak and negotiate; this is prayer. We have to pray, for we believe that God is near us and that He is wise and strong. We believe that He loves us, loves us more than our fathers and mothers do. Therefore our heart and lips open; being rooted to the earth we are in need of bread, sunshine, rain, and grace and we cry out to Him; we disclose our anxieties and everything that endangers our peace. No kind of philosophy, no kind of insight into the mechanism of nature will confuse the genuine instinct of such feeling, striving hearts; nor will we condemn to stupid dumbness our hearts which rise above mechanism and materialism. Prayer is the mother-tongue of our souls; let us never forget that.

(*b*) "*Whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*" (*John* xv. 16.) Whatsoever? The mechanism of the world we cannot stop; we are not successful in our prayers for rain or sunshine; for the conversion of the wicked, so what does "whatsoever" mean? Jesus explains: He also begged and prayed, and did not gain what He begged for. What a grace the unanswered prayer of Jesus is to us! To beg in the name of Jesus therefore means as much as to beg according to His example; to beg in this way: Lord, if it be possible . . . if it be Thy will . . . to beg in the name of Jesus means as much as to rise above troubles, adversities, and miseries, so that if we do not get sunshine and rain on the crops we should always receive it on our soul and even if our crop rots we should receive perseverance and strength for life. Jesus also won this hearing. After having prayed, He says: *surgite, eamus;* come, let us go, let us conquer. Let us also understand His reproach: "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." (*John* xvi. 24.)

(*c*) Let us place our longing, imploring soul in this state of praying faith and let us cry to God: (1) for earthly things: Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread and He prayed that His life might be spared. (2) Let us pray for each other. In the prayer that Jesus taught us He did not use the singular number; He considered all our interests together. The power of evil shall not terrify us, neither the will of the resisting ones; God is strong. He can turn all ill aside. (3) Let us pray with profound exertion. We struggle with ourselves and with the load of worlds weighing upon us, let us cry out to the strong God. Let us seek Him and His consolations as the wounded deer seeks the springs of water. Let us thirst for God and cling to Him. (4) Let us pray with perseverance, for we are in need of the Lord. He is Lord; He is able to give life. We go after Him; let us beg Him seven times a day! (5) Let us pray with resignation; the focus of our prayer is: Thy will be done, O Lord; and even if we sweat blood, let us whisper: Not our will, but Thine be done.

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

"*And it came to pass, that as he was in a certain place praying, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray.*" (*Luke* xi. 1.)

(*a*) Teach us to speak to the Infinite and lead us on to those paths upon which our soul finds its way to God so that it is able to talk to Him. Master, we see that Thou art able to become absorbed and canst speak with God. We also feel that life must not be allowed to become dull and formal, our soul must not be allowed to be crushed by the mechanism of nature. Often our feeble heart instinctively longs for original truth, original beauty, and original strength, for it notices that the world is filled with form, that is with ideas, with beauty, that is with joy. God is so near! We stretch out our arms towards Him, but we do not trust ourselves and our inspirations. Therefore, Our Lord, Thou the "seeing" one, Thou the "Master," who came from God, Thou teach us the mother-tongue, which God understands as well as we. Teach us the sweetest mother-tongue of the soul, which is prayer!

(*b*) "*And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens . . . thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven.*" (*Matt.* vi. 7.) To pray, that is to turn towards the Infinite, to awake to the consciousness of the depths opening in our soul, to be steeped in the radiation of nature and grace and to seek that word which shall be our strength, life and joy; this praying word which says all is: Our Father. Many only saw darkness and unfriendliness in existence, for their soul was dark. Jesus pervades life with light and warmth. They saw only clouds, He saw the sun. They saw only chaos; He saw loving ideas. They walked towards the abysses of ruin, He makes souls run through the darkness, as children through a dark room with beating heart . . . into the arms of His Father. This is the spirit which darts towards us from out of nature and the supernatural world. This it is that places our soul in light and melts our heart! Therefore we do not only say, but sing that joyous revelation: Our Father! Our Father!

"HE CASTETH OUT DEVILS BY BEELZEBUB"

"*But some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils. . . . But he seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall.*" (*Luke* xi. 15.)

(*a*) And these were also men who believed that they were of good will, and yet this is how they thought of their Lord. Behold how dark and distorted subjective conception and feeling can be; it can be completely interwoven with emotional elements; it can misunderstand everything, even Christ. It is of these the Lord says: generation of vipers, poison is grafted in you; you throw out poison from yourselves. You are convex mirrors, everything becomes distorted in you. For the recognition of truth a purified, disciplined, ordered, elevated disposition and frame of mind are necessary, for our being pleased or displeased and our sympathy and antipathy strongly influence us. Self-examination and freedom of the soul are necessary to virtue.

(*b*) "*But if I by the finger of God cast out devils: doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you.*" We cannot doubt about the work of Jesus; He renders everyone better and nobler and brings them nearer to God. This is the finger of God in His work. If it were bad it would give itself away here and there. This is what He appropriately says elsewhere: "*The good man brings forth good things from the good treasure and the evil one evil things from the bad treasure.*" "Good treasure" is the bounty which is accumulated in Him. As honey from many flowers collects in the hive, so the "good treasure" collects in us; this is purified good-will, that is, will corresponding to aim, situation, and tasks. "Bad treasure" is the darkened, poisoned, distorted frame of mind. It is a sad treasure. What a great word is the one which says: Peace on earth to those of goodwill.

(*c*) "*But I say unto you that every idle word . . . They shall render an account in the day of judgement for it.*" (*Matt.* xii. 36.) The moral rule has to be asserted in everything; words, jokes, good humour, conversation, and small talk should be the reflection of the beautiful and good soul. Frivolous, critical, sharp, abusing, cold talk is November rain which makes the forest rot and causes mud. We hate abuse, for we shall have to give account of it on the day of judgement. We loathe that unprecise, unconscientious expression which places the individuality of others in an untrue light and at one time takes away something from it and at another time adds to it. We loathe those nuances and shades of conversation which make a wedge between men, as well as gossip which only speaks of faults and frailties and with which those who practise such gossip unconsciously tickle their selfish, malignant disposition. The consciously good and aristocratic soul avoids all this; it takes care of itself, especially by awaking goodwill toward others, so that in talk and conversation it should be neither a market-fly, a wasp, nor a scarab.

WARNING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS

"*And he said to them: Take heed and beware of all covetousness: for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth. And he spoke a similitude to them, saying: The land of a certain rich man brought forth good fruits. And he thought within himself, saying: What* *shall I do? And he said: This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and will build greater. . . . And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer.*" (*Luke* xii. 15.)

(*a*) My soul, take thine ease, be merry! The aim of all men is the happy life. And the way to it? Is it to eat, drink, enjoy, to banish trouble and strife . . . to live, create, act, and do . . . to work, to quarry stones, burn lime, build houses . . . to change life into a garden and put pleasure, flowers and scent into it? Is this the way? "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for no one's life consisteth of the things he possesseth," but everyone has to understand himself, to understand the hunger, thirst, and speech of his soul. One is not allowed to wall in the soul's prospects of eternity, to cover the stars with stucco and to break off the wings of faith and hope; for the blind, tormented, and stifled fullness of life cannot lead to happiness. Not to possess much but to experience and live in God, virtue, trust, and love: it is on the abundance of these that life depends.

(*b*) What are we reassured by? "*Fideles in dilectione acquiescent illi.*" Those who love faithfully and who serve faithfully for love are reassured. We have to exclude: (1) Sin. (2) Restlessness, feverish inconsistency, confusion, distrust, by strong and true discipline of our soul. We are to have diligent faith in the Lord, in big and small things. Also in our emotions, so that the pure stream of our soul should not be disturbed. We do not wish to cling to single emotions or to our dark thoughts and ideas. We strive against depression and apathy. Our soul is a moulding force and it is able to "find great peace and quiet."

(*c*) "*But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that . . . is not rich towards God.*" God says: Thou fool! Eternal wisdom says it, which tends and loves life and which sees the dreadful waste and degeneration of it. Only life in God can be happy, that is the life which is rich in love, truth, holiness, and moral strength. Rich are those in whom God dwells and to whom He imparts His light, beauty, joy, and strength. Let us always separate these two things: the inner world of our soul and that which surrounds us, for example, house, position, and man, and let us well feel that we are able to be light, bright, and warm in spite of these. I beg thee shape thy life thyself and do not expect others to do it for thee.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOM THE LORD SHALL FIND WATCHING

"*Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands. And you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord. . . . Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them.*" (*Luke* xii. 35.)

Estimable, wonderful energies can develop the world of spiritual life. That may be a poor, swampy country—but it may be Canaan on the borders of primeval forest. The necessary conditions of well-developed soul-life are these:

(*a*) We are ready to die at any time, for we are prepared concerning our individual soul-world. Is our heart pure and does our soul side with God? We may have many unfinished works; our family and children have need of us; but our soul is clean; we look Jesus in the eyes with humble trust. We also love life, we love the flowers and forests, art and science, and the grand perspectives of the world's development, but we view all this as the *prœludium* to eternal, beautiful life, and the "*prœludium*" does not make us forget the "*opera*." These inclinations of ours are only the gold-washing out of the sand, and because of the grains of gold we do not despise the golden bars. Oh, thou beautiful, holy, rich, eternal life, towards which we hurry, we already experience and live it in its foretaste here below.

(*b*) We are not to love and seek for anything at the price of perplexity and embarrassment; neither career, comfort, glory, and pleasure, nor betrothal nor any enterprise! Let us love ardently and truly but every tendency and endeavour must be subject to the will of Christ. This is that nobility of soul, that noble unpretentiousness which walks upon earth, but which treads the mud and does not take roots in it.

(*c*) To do everything as well as possible, to do it perfectly. To have a sense for refinement. We have to attend to our motives and intentions and to the straightforward, noble way of our proceedings. To notice the many kinds of shadows in us, the dregs and faults, bitterness and distaste. But also to notice improvement and to enjoy the good and noble in ourselves.

BE YOU READY

"But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready: for at what hour you think not, the son of man will come." (*Luke* xii. 39.)

(*a*) The Lord cometh, but no one knoweth when He comes. Experience proves this unceasingly; for death does not only surprise those who have been struck by lightning or have had a stroke, but it surprises those also who die in bed. Who knows of the approach of death? Maybe others do, but the invalid does not. Neither did the Saints know when death would overtake them. St. Francis of Xavier was preparing to go to China on the day of his death. That is why our soul has to be in order. It is not accidental death that is dreadful but death in the state of mortal sin. Therefore, at every case of death, our first thought should be: Where is his soul? Has he obtained salvation? How should we have fared, if we had died?

(*b*) At the end of a "short" life death awaits us. God has measured "the number of the days," and He gave them for eternal aims. At the time of our judgement He calls up time and confronts us with it. Time is an empty shape, a receptacle; but we have to fill it with inner life and outward activity. We have to fill it to the brim with consecrating grace, only in these divine, deep waters the pearls are born and treasures hidden; the pure, holy, noble feelings, emotions, and actions. "*Dies mali*," the bad days, are those which contain no sunshine, no love of God.

Let us rejoice and work as long as we are healthy; after death "there will be no time"; or there will be a time but not one for salvation.

(*c*) At our death we have many graces for conversion, but the time is not at all appropriate for it; for how weak and low-spirited the frail and ailing disposition is. Even excellent confessors cannot always help. The Blessed Bellarmine could give no help when the invalid said to him: "I do not understand thee, what dost thou say?" In the parable of the ten virgins the unreasonable maidens offend the betrothed, by not caring about oil; "I do not know you," was the answer. It is a dreadful word which indicates eternal midnight. To die well means as much as to die, (*a*) without sin, (*b*) having divested ourselves of our evil inclinations, (*c*) having acquiesced in the will of God, (*d*) accepting death as the punishment of God. "*Magnum opus.*"

EXHORTATION TO PENANCE

"*And there were present at that very time some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answering said to them: Think you that these Galilæans were sinners above all the men of Galilee, because they suffered such things? No, I say to you, but unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish.*" (*Luke* xiii. 1.)

Our sinfulness. (*a*) It is a great grace if one feels one's sinfulness deeply, for then one sees already with the heart. Let us view our life. Is not St. Paul right in saying that he is the greatest of sinners? Is not St. Mary Magdalen right, and St. Margaret of Cortona, or anyone who has a deeply feeling heart and a consciousness of guilt? We also have sins: against God (unbelief, disrespect, distrust, grumbling, blasphemy), against ourselves (intemperance, want of discipline, sensuality, impurity, faintheartedness, laziness, cowardliness, selfishness), against others (maligning, calumny, vain talk, envy, hate, injustice, simulation, violence). What accusations do the Ten Commandments of God and the Five Commandments of the Church make us hear? What does the missing of duty accuse us of? Oh, how many sins there are in thought and feeling, how many faults concerning the Sacraments! To how many souls have we caused scandal! Sins and floods of mud.... "My soul does not remain in the body for it is flesh."

(*b*) We have to taste the bitterness and loathing of sin. It divests us of the spirit and *the mark of beasts* comes to the surface in us. Unbelief extinguishes our light; despair places us in eternal winter. Instead of the Gospel of the soul the inspirations of the flesh, instincts, and passions excite us. *Man becomes coarse* in his feelings in spite of laces, perfume, and frock-coats. Culture is only a veneer if it is not founded on morality. *The servant becomes a rebel and insurgent* against God, without God; but at the same time he is the slave of another power the fetters of which he drags about with him. Sin is poison; it changes blood to matter, it disfigures the face, and renders the organs torpid; the blood is grace, the face is the likeness to God, the organs are virtues. In great measure sin changes men to monsters here on earth, or it makes their bodies rot. What an evil-smelling swamp such a soul is. The wreath has fallen off its head. It has lost its merits. Its guardian angel buries his face in his hands and weeps, "*angeli Dei amare flebunt*." The heart of Jesus is sad; the graces of His salvation are wasted.

(*c*) For the Lord what an unjust, offending hurt sin is! It is the sharpest contradiction which denies His reign, power, His rights, and holiness. . . . It is a contrast to Him and His person; as a matter of fact it is atheism. The divine soul extinguishes the sparks of its nobleness and becomes as the beast, it rolls in the mud and is distorted; while infinite perfection and sanctity dictates law, lays a claim to reverence and love and abundantly presents His graces. He educates kingly souls and they sit upon a rubbish-heap and despise Him. What will this lead to, where will it end? "They shall strip thee of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare, heaped with shame." (*Ezekiel* xvi. 39.)

GOD AND THE SINNER

The rôle of God and man in sin.

(*a*) What has God done with us? He loved us . . . that is why He created us and took us for His special children. The state of being sons of God is the content and characteristic of grace. Verily our Father is He; He bore and educated us, He taught us and loves His blood; He hears its cry; "The blood of thy brother cried out to me," He says to Cain. The prodigal sons also bear His traits and His graces and Angels accompany them. Verily we also, as soon as we were born, became the sons of God in baptism and were registered in His Book of Life. An angel accompanied us and a wonderful, bright shadow, grace; in this grace God lived; moral shadows were not yet attached to us; then our passions began to awake and we sinned for the first time and after that how often! Our first communion, our partaking of the Sacraments, prayers, good examples and zeal opposed the corrupt surroundings, the dirty and defiled streams. How much disfigurement and how many struggles! How often the buds of the soul have been broken, how often the pure wells of emotion and feeling have dried, and the holy fire gone out. We have become corrupted and weak.

(*b*) The state of the child of God does not exhaust the graces of the Lord. We do not only possess God, we also have Christ. He has grafted Himself amongst us and into us; "*Unus ex nobis!*" . . . He came from afar, but He came; love brought Him; He came in disguise, in the dusk of *mysterium*. So that the feelings of brotherliness should awake in us and flourish. He gave us a mother. What did He rightly expect of us in exchange? Innocence, purity, friendship, faithfulness; He expected brotherly feelings from the brother; He expected the strength of blood and the nobility of brotherliness to remain victorious in us and to find its glory in our nobility. And what has become of us? Of our blood? It has turned to water. Sensuality has putrefied us and dulled our senses. What has become of the child of God? What of the Christ-face? "*Vas iræ*, a vessel of anger." We became the unfaithful servants, the traitors of the first-born, adorable brother.

(*c*) Brotherhood does not exhaust the sweet connection between God and our soul. He drew us on, He adopted us to be His Levites, His Apostles, His betrothed. We remember how vocation stirred in us, how the altar attracted and drew us, how sweet attraction, ecstasy, satisfaction and union filled our memory. Maybe, He anointed us also, maybe He affianced us to Himself! And what became of man after this? A worm. What became of the child of God? A prodigal son. What has become of us, whom God educated with the wisdom of Solomon in His Church, whom He guarded in a walled garden and for whom He made His followers pray and fast on Ember Days? We became hireling souls. What has become of us whom He trained to be Apostles with the warmth of His heart? We stabbed His heart and deserted Him; we turned away from Him who hangs upon the Cross and calls after us, and when we approach Him He takes His hand off the nail and lifts us up and strains us to His heart, He forgives and forgets everything. Oh, how intensely we have to loathe sin, how we have to weep over our unfaithfulness, our downfall, our slavery and loss! We do indeed feel our weight and feel what we are to do henceforward so as to redound to the credit of the Gospel and to the glory of Christ. Oh, His blood is indeed precious, it must not be trodden on. O Lord, this we cannot bear!

THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST

"*And there shall come from the east and the west the north and the south; and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, they are last that shall be first, and they are first that shall be last.*" (*Luke* xiii. 29.)

(*a*) The final aim is eternal life; the immediate aim is the Christian life on earth. All of us priests, laymen, hermits, soldiers, merchants, nuns and married people—all have one aim and that aim is: the beautiful, divine life. Concerning this there is no difference between us; where there is soul and consciousness there the prospects open on to divine life, whether they come from the cells or the nursery. In just the same way there is no difference between us in the fact that life is not ready-made, either in the cloister or the workshop, but we have to shape and develop it, everyone according to his circumstances of life, whether we be in the world or in a monastery. And Christianity is that unity where this one mutual aim preserves us and gives us enthusiasm and where the course of regeneration, purification, and of becoming stronger and more ardent proceeds for the development of divine life! It is a transfiguration for every human soul. Therefore there are not two kinds of Christianity, just as there are not two aims and not two kinds of Christian life. There are not two kinds of Church, of which the one is the clergy and the other the laity, not one which belongs to the priests and the other to the worldlings. We can live a Christian life everywhere and can be immersed in it everywhere. The words of the Saviour are meant for everyone: those who do the will of My Father, those enter the kingdom of heaven, and again He says: It is the will of My Father that ye be saints. Just as there are Christ-like souls everywhere, so saints exist in every vocation. That is why one can be more a saint in the world than another in a monastery, and some can come to salvation who live in the world and others to damnation in the monastery. . . . O Lord, grant that we should look with trust upon Thee! Grant that we may feel and experience what Thou wishest us to do, that we may feel that entire, great holy aim which Thou hast set up before us. We are not second-rate Christians; we must not want to creep into a corner of heaven; we claim the entire Christ; and shape our entire life according to Him. It shall not disturb us that we are not in the hierarchy of the Church, that we are neither priests nor bishops and that we do not live in cloisters! You are all brothers, is what Thou hast said; Your aim is one, one is your Master and your life.

(*b*) The means. In these there is a great difference; the circumstances of life open different ways; seemingly they point to various directions. There are those who are exclusively devoted to the care of souls in the religious orders, or profess the tending of the soul's life as their vocation in the clergy; others again lead a "worldly" life. These professions differ from each other not in their aim but in the difference of the means, and the most poignant difference is that some follow the Evangelical Counsels and others endeavour to achieve Christian life without these. Life is the aim here also as well as there; the "Counsels" only count as means. Both religious and seculars have to cultivate their soul, to meditate, to pray, to practise self-denial, partake of the Sacraments, and to love; but all these are means again and the means are valuable in so far as they help to achieve the aim. We pray, fast and check our passions so that we can live from and in the love of Christ. What is the good of means, profession, position, and occupation if we do not achieve this? What folly it is to be proud of the means; just as it is folly to disparage the means, the prayer and Sacraments, giving as a reason that only the aim impresses us! It is a great grace if we are able to live for God according to the counsels of the Gospel; but let us make use of everything in the world for becoming purer, nobler, and more at home in the feelings of Christ, that we may do the holy will of God. The aim gives value to the means, the contents give value to the shape. The modern man seeks in shape and form more consciousness, depth, and ardour; in religiousness he urges the same; he does well. And he can also achieve this. Even without theological science he is able to descend to the depths with Thomas à Kempis and can achieve ardour of the heart.

(*c*) So therefore life and life again . . . this is the watchword. We do not seek system and formality, but we seek life. We wish to educate ourselves to a serious, deep reverence toward the divine, so that we may possess deep feeling, mysterious presentiment and emotion, tender, childish faith, warm love, prayer, enthusiasm, and remorse. We willingly think of eternal life towards which we are hurrying and we long for eternal youth with the ardour of the youthful soul. We wish to become purer with great, true longing and continually to feel more nobly and purely! All that is not pure and not divine is only semblance and disappointment. Who loves this does not live truly. Therefore let us love the eternal, true, divine life and let us obtain it at any price!

HEALING OF THE MAN THAT HAD THE DROPSY

"*And it came to pass when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the sabbath day to eat bread, that they watched him. And behold, there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy.*" (*Luke* xiv. 1.)

(*a*) What unpretentious, simple, profound words these are: "to eat bread." It breathes discipline, force, and health. In Jesus life is sound and complete, it is not weakened; nature is being satisfied but not weakened by its satisfaction. Of men on the whole it is true to say that they do not die but kill themselves by exhausting their vital force in excitements and desires and low pleasures. It is a pity that so many noble inspirations come to ruin in this way. Men are thus deprived of much pure, sweet enjoyment and many deep feelings. Their souls shrivel like the sprouts of spring in the frost of May. O beautiful life, to how many vicissitudes art thou exposed. What we need is purity, self-control, moderate food, little alcohol, and hardening. Let us willingly keep the fast.

(*b*) "*And Jesus . . . spoke . . . Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? But they held their peace. But he taking him, healed him, and sent him away.*" What conception of God can there be in these heads, what small, miserable ideas and at the same time what fanaticism! Let us view the idols; what has man made of God? "He has made graven images for himself." As we view these things, deep sorrow soon changes to conscientiousness, faithfulness, willingness, and we say to ourselves: Let us take care not to make the great ideas of God shrivel. Let us be sensitive so as to notice what the Lord is and how great He is. Let us keep and hallow His feasts. If we do good we have a feast. When we do good, let us have a festive mood. Often this is not the case; what a pity it is not so!

(*c*) "*And he spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them: When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him; and he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place.*" Behold the hair-splitters of the sabbath, the proud faces, motley turbans, long caftans, and, inside, the narrow-minded malice which demands: Who sits first? All these are mere formalities. Jesus wants morality, therefore He indicates the real longing which wishes to assert itself to the inner world; therefore He transfers the centre from the outside to the inner world. Jesus views this low-minded squabble with sadness. He wishes us to prove effective and assert ourselves; wishes us to take part in the work of the world, but He urges ardour and unpretentiousness, deepness and modesty. He does not despise the outer things but provides for the inner ones. He wishes force and substance to be in our lives! We are not to achieve honour by arrogant self-assertion, but by adequate virtues; for "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased"; it is God who abases and ruins them. "Though thou be exalted as an eagle and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (*Abd.* i. 4.)

PARABLE OF THE SUPPER

"*A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready.*" (*Luke* xiv. 16.)

(*a*) God has a personal connection with men and so have men with God. We are not only a combination of organs, and muscles, but individuals, and God is not only the source of strength and existence but our personal Lord and our Father. In so far as we have forces we develop them, we work and strive and, subject to the great laws of development, we do our duties. And in so far as we are individuals and souls, we believe in Him and love Him. Reciprocally, the Lord also highly values us; He esteems us, "gives us supper," that is, He looks upon us as good friends to whom He gives joy as well as consolation. We are His children also and He has confidential intercourse with us. He makes us sit at His table and feeds us with His bread. We rejoice in this sweet connection which flatters us indeed. We gladly come together with Him, as those who partake of the "great supper." We look upon it as our duty that we belong to Him with heart and soul.

(*b*) "*And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him, I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them: I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*" What a pity that that is why they did not go to the joy of the Lord. The Lord wishes us to perform the various duties of life, but we are not to treat His invitation and our earthly activity as irreconcilable opposites. We have to hoe the soil and mould nature that we may have a life worthy of man, but the Lord is our strength, light, and treasure. Our connection with God is not altered by our physical condition, for this is His will. We are men, husbands and wives, we live in families; but we feel ourselves to be near God and rejoice in His love. God is our Lord and we have to become the lords of the world; He wishes it. This is what the saying "*ora et labora*" means; pray and work, and when we work, let us work as such do who accomplish the will of God. Then work will not tear us away from God, but on the contrary it will help us to a stronger and more real conception of God, man, and the great world-order.

(*c*) "*And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame.*" It is a pity that man finds it so difficult to reconcile the earth and sky, work and religious life. The brave and strong ones turn their back upon God, and religious life is led by the maimed, the halt, and blind. For this is the picture of the world and the Church, is it not? There we often see the most gifted and here there are many simpletons. But as a matter of fact this is the state of barbarism, the view of the state of violence, which failed to unite the two worlds which present themselves in man and could not create that harmony in which the spirit asserts itself in work, among machines and serious endeavour, and where the higher claims of the soul have a leading part. Therefore we place our all in the holy service of God, however gifted and strong we are, and because we love God we will not be less strong, less brave and understanding, but we will become even more so.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep.*" (*John* x. 11.)

(*a*) The good shepherd is a favourite figure of revelation. A thousand years before Christ, God showed us David as a shepherd; a brave and strong shepherd who pursued the bear and lion and fought with them. He went to the "valley of robbers" and to the "valley of the birds of prey"; he kept night-watch by the shepherd's fire and kept the tigers, jackals, and hyenas at a distance. Ezekiel promises the best shepherd who will not be like the heartless shepherds of souls of the folk of Israel, but one who "strengthens the weak, heals the ailing, tends the sick," who walks in the wilderness and has no fear; his zeal and love bear him on. Jesus is a brave, striving, strong-minded shepherd; it is such a soul the Apostles need; they have to walk, beg, seek and have no fear. The clergy can all take part in these feelings, for are not they "kingly clergy" indeed? All can save souls, can warn them and guard them from sin, can beg them to return to Jesus, and can pray for them!

(*b*) "*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" (*John* x. 14.) He does not spare Himself fatigue and sacrifice, He endures and does not save Himself trouble. His source is inexhaustible; for it is His great heart. In the moral world these traits assert themselves; they are conspicuous in every apostolic soul. The Apostle Paul says: "*Our* flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." (2 *Cor.* vii. 5.) The apostolic soul has above all to pray much. Prayer is the breath of the ardent soul; in it the soul sums itself up, its longings and suffering. And while praying for others is zealous itself. These hot-blooded, strong, plastic souls serve the reign of the better, serve progress and beauty. Spirituality fills them. They possess a sense for the soul.' They feel the troubles of the soul and have compassion for it. This is the sense we have to develop in ourselves at every step; let us look into souls and feel their troubles.

(*c*) Not one, but millions, wander about in the wilderness! We must not break down under the weight of this knowledge. We would break down if we derived the motives of our ardour from the way of the world; but, thanks to Our Lord, our sources gush forth in the heights. The world is shaped according to the great ideas of God; sometimes faith and morals are overclouded, and the waste of frivolity and corruption gains ground. This we cannot help! We do not wish to complain of the waste and desert, but we wish to place an adaptable soul into it, to go there ourselves in the footsteps of "the good shepherd." The air of the moral heights and field of virtues is breathed upon us also; we walk the mystical forest-edge of contact with God, and though we see the desert our heart is not contracted. God wishes us to work, and we go and do so.

(*d*) The little lamb does not only go astray but becomes caught in thorny bushes. Going astray is sin and the shrub of thorns is the consequence of sin; a bush of thorns is the remorse of conscience, illness, dishonour, poverty, prison, and the anger and contempt of others. Who gets caught amongst such thorns and suffers the punishment of his sins, is to experience the love of the good shepherd. He heals these wounds also; He helps to smooth over our troubles or gives us courage with which to bear them according to His spirit and the salvation of our soul.

(*e*) The shepherd has two staffs—with the one he protects and with the other he drives and cares for his sheep.

At night he is the " gate " of which Christ says: " I am the gate." For he stands at the gate of the fold and scrutinizes the returning lambs with a keen, sharp eye. If he sees an injury on one of them he catches it with his crooked stick, draws it to him and rubs its wounded legs with cedar oil, and he refreshes the exhausted ones with fresh water. Shepherds of souls, priests, stand beside the good shepherd and watch how He scrutinizes and worries, how He tends and cares about every single one; how He binds wounds and how He encourages and instigates the fatigued ones. Ye have to offer your followers oil and scented, healing ointment, ye have to give them strength of soul. Ye have to know your followers, to call them by their name and direct them. The heart of the good shepherd teaches you this. We must shrink back from helpless formality, whenever we come to realize His life-giving energy. He is the shepherd of souls, their caretaker, instructor, healer and governor.

(*f*) " *I say unto you, the jöy for a repenting sinner goes before the angels of God.*" The good shepherd is not a world-weary figure; He has divine joys. The sweetest feeling which permeates heaven flows into His soul; it is that of strong, sublime, victorious joy. This is the way to conquer; man has to be lifted out from the dangers of endless misery and hell; this dark midnight has to be exchanged for glorious sunshine and damnation changed into the graces of God. Let the stars of heaven shine above souls, let peace and joy reign in us. Who achieves the like does more than artists and prophets, and greater enjoyment floods his soul than if he possessed every science and the world did fête him; " I who know every joy tell you that this joy is not earthly, not kingly, it is the joy of the angels," and angelic joys inspire us to immeasurable perseverance and sacrifice. What a giant is such a one who can say of his followers what the Apostle said: "You are my wreath and my joy."

THE PRODIGAL SON. I

"*A certain man had two sons.*" (*Luke* xv. 11.)

(*a*) There are two of them, sons of one father, inhabitants of one house, but two souls dwell in them, two contrary souls. To one of them the home is dear, dear are the house, the garden, the shadows of the olive and fig-tree; the other one was listless, he was discontented with the house and with love, he laughed at his father; this was the younger one. The soul of youth is violent, haughty, hard, and unruly; it tears, breaks, and easily disdains. This comes partly from ignorance and inexperience of the fact that we stand on each other's shoulders and are in need of one another. We have to esteem and honour each other; no one lives and stands alone. Secondly, it comes from cruel thoughtlessness which does not think of and weigh the load and strife of life; it plunges into the world where it may lose all for the sake of some small pleasure. Let us be reasonable; development is a slow, great work; the world is not made by one man; every one of us is a continuation; let us draw conclusions from the past and accomplish the duties of the present with a great soul. Let us believe that we are biassed in many things and that wisdom and happiness go with self-control.

(*b*) "*And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.*" The son is arrogant and exacting with his father. He was born in wealth, and considers himself entitled to a life of ease. The heartlessness of his son pains the father, but he gives the son his portion. We do not realize what we owe the Lord: we owe Him health, our five senses, and a sound body and soul. What would become of us if we were blind, deaf, and dumb? But the more we possess the more we become conceited. And God suffers our ingratitude and does not withdraw His favours. Oh, let us be devoted to the Lord and make use of what we possess for serving His glory. If the sunlight shines into our eyes and makes the colours of nature glow—and if our soul is filled with the harmony of forms and we want to sing, then let us love, love very ardently, and be more closely attached to the Lord.

(*c*) " . . . *went abroad into a far country: and there wasted his substance living riotously.*" The son departed, he broke the bonds which unite hearts; he wanted to be free; his imagination drew hopes for him, and his inexperienced strength went forth to seek new professions. "To err is human," but in one thing it is not permitted to err; one has to keep strictly to the moral order. Sometimes our soul becomes estranged from God; as if we were in a strange land and far away from Him; even under such circumstances let us strictly exact the accomplishment of the moral law. Man is in a strange country if he so far forgets God and himself that he commits sin. God is everywhere, but separation from Him is revealed in the depths of our conscience. How bottomless and dark they are!

(*d*) The son went to a strange land, where he was out of place—where he had no home and peace—where he was not understood; where they did not nurse him when he became ill and did not care about him when he felt happy; where he met unfeelingness and hardness. It is a strange country where the soul grows cold and weak; it is a strange country where there is no love, comfort, peace, and joy. A strange country is the country of unbelief, immorality, selfishness, impurity, and ungodliness. This is not our native country!

(*e*) "*And he went, and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine.*" The greatest treasure is man himself: his capabilities, and forces, his graces, brain, will, disposition, faith, love, trust, bravery, and purity! How poor is he who has squandered all this! He seeks recovery; but only partly finds it; he mends but will have no new robe; he wishes to forget but his fullness of life and hilarity will not be refunded. How many such beggars walk the paths of the world, the paths of defeated armies! How easily many part with these sublime treasures! This is the most dreadful waste, this sad squander of treasures. "*Particula boni doni non te prætereat*," do not waste even a crumb of the divine goods. Thou art rich and wealthy; live thy life, that is, fill thy consciousness and soul by making use of thy forces and gifts.

THE PRODIGAL SON. II

"*There came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want.*"

(*a*) Although he enjoyed and rejoiced and although he was stunned and intoxicated, yet his soul began to suffer and be repelled. He felt that he had become mean and base; the knowledge of his sin, beastliness, and cruelty overcame him; he had destroyed the hopes of his father and the sanctuaries of his youth. From his brow he had wiped away the salve of the sublime; from the arms of the loving God he came to the breast of harlots and from the throne of the immaculate, pure, strong sonship of God he descended to the trough. The stars of sanctity and idealism were extinguished in his sky, he stood in darkness, and neither honour, health, modesty, friendship, nor self-esteem could throw obstacles in the way of ruin. Amidst this decay and in this cruel night he began to feel, his heart began to awake and move him. Lovely stars, memories of his youth, the face of his father, appeared in his soul; he heard the sound of encouraging words; attachments awoke in him: why art thou in this barren, heartless misery, and even if thou hast broken away, why dost thou not return, when thou seest that thou art disappointed and hast sinned, hast become sad and miserable; why dost thou not return? is what the inner voice asked him, when a new sunrise awaiteth thee and the watching soul of thy father cries out for thee?

(*b*) "*And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father.*" "I will arise," said the youth, "and return. I have to have honour, love, beauty, strength, and joy. I cannot stand it here in this soul-withering, strange land. I will not cripple my life to a curse and shame, and though I have lost much, the knowledge of my loss shall not lame my forces, and I shall do all that I am still able to do and develop all the energy and vitality there is in me." Repentance and sorrow, even if they point to the losses, will never incapacitate the holy soul from making a fresh start. God wishes us to return and live. We will do so. We will not wait till we have regained what we have lost. We do not say that we cannot return in rags, but that we will work and earn and then start. With God this " sense of honour " is an impossible attitude ; here we are only dependent on grace and we have to accept it with humility !

(*c*) " *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee ; I am not worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants . . . His father saw him . . . and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him.*" And he departed and his father received him ; he did not beget him to extinguish the spark of life hidden in him ; with his love he assured him new strength and a fresh start. He was dirty, his father washed him ; he was ragged and he robed him. The father replaced the ring of affinity upon his finger and changed the accustomed house and surroundings to a festive house of harmony. This is what we need : to become purified, to regain the feeling of being a son of God, to enjoy the presence of God, and grace as a feast and as a joy. With such a mentality we cannot imagine a fresh rupture. That is why it is so important to awake to the consciousness of our dignity, nobility, beauty, and strength . . . to the consciousness of that feast which we are chosen to celebrate.

(*d*) " *Now his elder son was in the field, and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. . . . And he was angry, and would not go in. His father therefore coming out began to entreat him . . . Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry . . . for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again : he was lost, and is found.*" His brother remained at home, he did not become a squanderer, did not cause bitterness to his father, did not fall; he lived without passions but at the same time without noble, deep emotions. A narrow-minded Philistine. He did not break away from his father but neither did he appreciate the good fortune implied in "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." This is that narrow-minded "goodness" varied with a great deal of unconsciousness, which is able to be envious and indignant, which prides itself on its narrow-minded virtuousness and judges others severely. This is the undeveloped, unconscious type of the children of God! Away with this attitude of mind; it is not worthy of the magnanimous heart of the Father! Let them shake out from their soul their sleepy dullness; let them experience the treasures of God, which are to be enjoyed in abundance, and let them rejoice when others receive them. All of us have an unlimited amount of graces; let us rejoice in them, both for ourselves and others.

THE UNJUST STEWARD

"*There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods.*" (*Luke* xvi. 1.)

(*a*) The parable refers in the first place to temporal goods. Everything belongs to God, and more or less of it is entrusted to our hands, but it is given to us to help us live a happy life and to show good feeling, a blissful frame of mind, joy, and bounty to others: "*Facere amicos*," viz., win the love, goodwill, and attachment of others. We also are stewards, this is the goal the Lord has set before us. We ought to see that the goods flow from our hands into the hands of others. We know that all goods are more or less common property, that many have worked at these goods; how reasonable is it therefore if we further the good and satisfaction of others with our goods. Social goodwill becomes the flower of deepest religious feeling, if we look upon our life and upon all we possess as upon stewardly goods which were given to us for the soul, the more beautiful, eternal life. "*Facere amicos* . . ." is a sublime aim; to educate good men and by so doing to build ourselves an "eternal home."

(*b*) Secondly, we can use all this for our own benefit. The Lord has provided us with much grace and many gifts; He has given us a position and a vocation. He has given us a greater or less share of the soil and of culture. Everything is ours: the work of epochs, the progress of history and evolution, present and past, the Prophets and saints, and the Lord Himself, He also is ours. But we are not His if we do not conquer ourselves for Him. It depends on our free will, our energy, interest, and endeavour to see that we ourselves and all we have belong to Him. It is on our initiative that everything of ours becomes the property of the Lord. Stewardship is our life; our aim therefore is not to possess this or that, not to possess much or little, but to be faithful in what we have. Therefore the substance of life is the frame of mind and disposition, not property, rights, and donations!

(*c*) "*And the steward said within himself: What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed . . . Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said: An hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill and sit down* *quickly, and write fifty.*" The steward works with the passion of self-preservation, so as to assure his life. We have to throw ourselves into our stewardship with care, interest, zeal, circumspection, and energy. (1) We have carefully to tend our soul; to work at it so that its feelings should be better and nobler; to destroy the worms, and break down the thorns. Not only to do more good quantitatively but to do more good in value and consciousness. (2) We have to take up the causes of Our Lord; His interests are the interests of the kingdom of God, of faith, morals, truth, kindness; they are the interests and the cause of souls and of the Church. These we have to notice with the instinct of self-preservation, be anxious about them, and jealously guard them. Without this the "sons of light" are shamed by the "followers of darkness."

BE FAITHFUL

"*And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.*" (*Luke* xvi. 9.)

Let us collect treasures by being faithful in everything.

(*a*) "*Be faithful.*" What a lovely expression this is, much more so than: Be my servant. The word servant means little, faithful means more; it opens up vistas of friendship . . . of betrothal. Friends and betrothed are the really faithful souls. God wishes us to be faithful, for He entrusted Himself and His treasures to us. (1) We are His servants; (2) we have to be His friends; (3) we may be His sweet betrothed ones. Faithfulness is nowhere so appropriate as here, where actually everything of ours belongs to Him, and where we have to serve His interests with all that we have. We must only seek Him and that which is His. Let us consecrate everything to Him: work, joy, tears, longings, sorrow—life. Let us cling to Him with our soul. "Now thou carrieth Me," says the Lord to His faithful servant, "I am thy load." Thou art on the way, thou art the divine carrier. Thou fightest and strugglest in the arena, thou divine fighter, "*usque . . . usque ad mortem*," until death. Then it is I who will repay thee.

(*b*) "*Faithful unto death.*" Only deep, passionate love is capable of a lifelong attachment. The great beauty of deep-minded souls is perseverance to the end. To persevere during a whole life-time; this is more than to be persevering through storm and waves, through water and fire. These are only symbols of life; there is more violence and difficulty in life than in these, more pain and bitterness, more hurts and blows. Life as well as death are mysteries. Let us pass through them with a faithful soul. We may have much doubt and consternation . . . but let us be faithful . . . many things we do not comprehend . . . but let us be faithful; we become confused and dejected . . . let us be faithful. Our motto must be faithfulness till death. Loyalty is the wings which carry us aloft to God.

(*c*) "*And I give you the crown of life*," that is, the wreathed, crowned life. The crown gives beauty and sublimity; the wreath is woven of flowers; scent, charm, joy of life, enthusiasm of spring, and a bridal soul go with it. It is to thee I give the flowering, beautiful, vital, joyous life. Thou dost enjoy it here below also, if thou art faithful, and thou wilt enjoy it completely after thy death, when thy soul is more free and suitable for fuller and stronger life. The divine will ought to be to us a law imposed on us from without. We must make it our own will and faithful, continual feeling. Thus it will belong to us and be our nature!

NOBODY CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS

"*No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*" (*Luke* xvi. 12.)

(*a*) Who are these two masters? The Lord, and what opposes Him; sublimity, beauty, strength and baseness, vileness, misery. Can there be a choice here? No, there cannot. In the presence of God there can be only rapture—"*rapit voluptas*." He who has come to know the Lord and has seen Him, will never forget Him. But the trouble is that we see Him only confusedly and know him only dimly, so it does actually come to a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, virtue and sin, song and noise, beauty and a painted mask, deep spirituality and passion. We have so many mistakes and faults of which to accuse ourselves; hordes of senseless, violent passions wreak havoc in us. Sometimes the depreciation of the world hurts us; the depressions of failure weigh us down; the riots of imagination disturb us in our judgments; our love becomes sensual and our soul fleshly. It is difficult to reserve ourselves entirely for the great Lord! Difficult indeed, this homage we can obtain only by dint of struggling and fighting.

(*b*) The striving, engrossing power is love. We must love the one and only Lord. What an easy service is love, and what a heavy one is "endurance," the joyless bearing of burdens! Love can adapt itself, it can stretch, be full of energy and broadmindedness. It can bear defeat without dismay. Napoleon defeated Blücher six times; Napoleon was defeated by Blücher once, but thoroughly. Even if we are defeated now and then, we have to go on striving; we have to do so, because we love; we love Our Lord. Sin shall not dishearten us. The other "master," the devil, can only be endured by those who are subject to his domination; to love him is impossible, and even endurance also becomes a sufferance, a loathing, a dread. "*Sustine*," "endure," is a heavy word; the servants of the devil groan beneath it. Their load is the torment of conscience and the unreliable, cruel sphinx which is life. They have no real, deep joy!

(*c*) A fool is one who serves the world and not himself. We only serve ourselves, our inner value, our spiritual beauty, force, and joy, if God is our Master! The world, that is, the opinion of others, their esteem and appreciation, is mere externality; they are values like obsolete bank-notes; for a time they are valuable, then they are merely paper. Semblance and iridescent refraction throw bright but bloodless figures into the void. And yet the world is imposed on by all this, for "the Pharisees heard all these things . . . and they derided him." (*Luke* xvi. 14.) Let them laugh. We have one Master, "*Deus cordis mei et pars mea*," the God of my heart is my treasure; decay and darkness are not our masters. Therefore we consistently and strenuously serve that one Master. Oh, if thou art a singer, do not let thy vocal cords grow slack; if a painter, do not let thy sight fail; if a sculptor, then do not let thy sense for form grow dull; if thou art an artist of the violin, piano, or 'cello, then do not let thy hearing weaken! Nor must we allow our senses, refinement, and alertness to grow weak concerning the Lord!

THE RICH MAN

"*There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen: and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores.*" (*Luke* xvi. 19.)

(*a*) He was clothed in purple and fared sumptuously, he lived a life of ease. He did not perish because he ate well, but because he lived a life which indulged its instincts and passions. He lived a life in which the flesh was master; in which the world and the instincts were the squandering power; a life in which God was forgotten. Whereas Lazarus the beggar was not crushed by his misery. Certainly, he was ailing; he lay on the ground; he was not haughty; he was accustomed to charity; he ate crumbs; but God he did not forget! Behold on the one hand the soul sitting on a throne but stuck to the ground, clothed in shining robes but carrying the chains of dead loads, and on the other hand the pure-minded man who lies on the ground but cries out for heaven, who is sore in body but pure in soul. The earth, position, and the flesh shall not be dead weights upon our soul; the body is the servant of the soul; according to St. Francis it is its "*asinello*," its carrier of loads. The soul dwells in the body, not the body in the soul. Modern prophets proclaim the liberation of sensuality, and youth believes that it will become strong if it enjoys. Real enjoyment is strength and the feeling of natural force which is full of grace. Do not let us break it down, either by intemperance, and alcohol, or by softness!

(*b*) The wealthy one died, was buried, and went to hell, while Lazarus died and was carried to heaven. Jesus plainly puts the final evil and good before our soul. There is hell, which is the conquering evil; there is heaven, which is the conquering good. Here upon earth also there is much evil; its chief manifestations are sin and death. But here the blood of Jesus filters in every direction and checks evil and misery, checks the mustiness of body and soul, the sorrow and shame; but there is an evil, a definitive evil—bad will—which directly and undisguisedly defies the creative and passionately loving God. There a dreadful collision occurs, a final crushing, and rejection; this is hell. Infinite mercy accompanies man in the accomplishments of his great duties, but if man opposes and defies the Sublimity of God, then God crushes him. Lord, we believe in and adore Thy Sublimity.

(*c*) "*And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*" When the damned one comes to himself, his consciousness is eternal agony; he remembers his life. The memories of men, graces, and sins surround him; church, cross, altar, sunshine and stars shine in his eyes. He sees his sinfulness, which developed and ended in damnation. What dreadful memories torment him! Memory makes him use his brains. What has he to consider? The senselessness of his life that ruined all, ruined grace, mercy, and love. It was easy, sweet, useful, and necessary that he should live well and in a holy way; but the time for this has passed; what is he to do henceforth? What means is he to use? What to avoid? What to beg for? The answer to all this is: *nihil, nihil.* How is he to assert his will? He has longings and thirst; he longs for one drop of water from the hand of the ulcerous Lazarus . . . but it is impossible for him to bring even this about. The beauty of God, the heavens, shine above him, but not for him. God is a centre, He draws everything to Him; but this attraction crushes his soul; this attraction is a dread to him. He knows and sees, but does not hope and does not love; he shows no zeal for good; he fears, he hates; he does not repent his sins, and does not pray; his God and his existence are "*tremor*," "*horror*" and "*dolor*" to him. This state also is a mystery; we do not comprehend it as long as the love of what is good and the hope of happiness live in us. This also is that "other" world!

HELL. I

"*And he cried, and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.*" (*Luke* xvi. 24.)

Hell also is the secret of faith; we stand before its locked gates, and can understand it to a slight extent only with the aid of similes.

(*a*) The first is the thought of the "second death." The damned one dies again, dies a second time when death freezes his soul, his feelings, longings, and hopes, and only consciousness lives. To die means to be torn away from life, the world, sunshine, blood, home, and humanity. To be here no more. And the second death means to be torn away from God, grace, love, to be torn away from

Christ, hope, prayer, cross, good-will ; to be torn away from all the benefits of Christ, from His merits, promises, and consolations. Likewise the second death is the most dreadful " state of being all by oneself." Who can endure this ? Creating love has given parents, brothers, home, so that we should not be all by ourselves. Christ said : " I will be with you." He promised a consoler who would remain with us. What are we to do, being alone ? To what can we set our hand in infinite space without God, without anything ?

(*b*) The second thought is aimlessness. Nature and mankind pursue aims ; they need an aim and keep it in eye. If they carry the aim in them then they have strength, they have life ; if they lose the aim they suffer and are in want. Aimlessness is torment ; here upon earth there is a partial torment such as illness, discord, fatigue, tediousness, loathing, despair—death. The soul enters the other world filled with the longing for the aim. As a stormy longing the passion for the final aim awakes in it and at that moment it wakes to the consciousness of the final loss of its aim. Everything broke down beneath it ; where is it to go ? What for ? To whom ? And why ? All this means an aim, therefore it is not for such a soul. Such a state means darkness, bonds on hands and feet, and the gnashing of teeth.

(*c*) The third thought is the curse. It is with the blessing of God that creation began ; God blessed every existence. Woe to those in whom existence is continued with the curse of God. We come from out of love ; " He hated nothing that He created," but now He hates. Love turns to hate. We believe it, though we do not understand the psychology of the infinite. What does despised love do ?

Don Jozé cries out in Bizet's opera : " It is I, I who killed her, my adored Carmen ! " Benjamin Constant writes about love : " *L'amour est de tous les sentiments le plus égoiste et par conséquence, lorsqu'il est blessé, le moins généreux.*" The Psalmist begs : Do not make me thine enemy ! We can spoil the work of God, the world of grace, and He can ruin our life and the blossoming of happiness and peace.

HELL. II

" *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead.*" (*Luke* xvi. 31.)

(*a*) Jesus proclaims penitence, but also proclaims heaven, absolution, and the Gospel. Both are grave. Grave as the abyss of the Alps and charming as the bluebells at the edge of the abyss ; solemn as the night and encouraging as the star-light. Jesus places enormous motives into our life : God becomes united with man and makes a god of man, He winds the aureole of the sonship of God round the head of all of us, points to eternity, and brings the "*pondus æternitatis*," this tremendous living force, to our consciousness. Eternity awaits you—this is what the light of the world which walks amongst us proclaims, this light which lights us also to the verge of hell. There exists happy and unhappy eternity ; let us fear unhappy eternity. " And I say to you my friends : Be not afraid of them who kill the body . . . fear ye him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." (*Luke* xii. 4.) Whom is hell meant for ? It is meant for all of us if we sin and are not converted. St. Paul fears hell, as well as St. Augustine ; the Holy Scripture does not release us from this fear.

What is more, Christ shatters every presumptuous conceit, saying: Ye are my friends, but ye can perish, if ye do not have a serious will, if ye do not strive and make sacrifices.

(*b*) Jesus looks upon us with the seriousness of eternity and demands sacrifice. The loss of eyesight, of wealth, sorrowful nights and prison, agony and martyrdom are as nothing to the man struggling to ensure the salvation of his soul. We have to be able to renounce every earthly good and to suffer every trouble for the sake of our soul. Let us rather step from sunshine to night, from freedom to prison, from life to death, than lose our soul. Let us therefore save the soul, let us make any sacrifice, let us be ardent, let us learn energy. Such existence has to be a striving, tiring one, fraught with great values, at the end of which eternal damnation or eternal salvation awaits us.

(*c*) Above the abyss of hell rises the cross. It is a warning on the edge of the abyss. It says: Do not go this way. Jesus suffers and looks at us with the final exhaustion of sacrifice; this glance freezes us. We comprehend Thee, Lord; we are not allowed to waste Thy blood, Thy merits and grace. What is the use of Christ and the cross if there is no hell, and likewise what is the good of Christ and the cross if still we come to hell? It seems as if we heard the words from the cross, as if the soft voice of the Gospel would change to a roaring cyclone and cry to us: "Fight, struggle for life; here ye are not allowed to fall!" God also wishes us to conquer and places everything at our disposal. Therefore let us seriously endeavour to win the fight.

HOPE, WITHOUT OVER-CONFIDENCE

(*a*) *We have to hope indeed, but never to be over-confident.* The flowing stream of our existence is God and His creating will. We proceed from Him. We were His design, His will; this is what we call creation. He imparted Himself, His existence and strength to beautiful creation, the culmination of which is the spiritual world. In the atmosphere of spirituality He again created a new world which is the partaking of divine nature; the world of grace, of the sonship of God and proximity to God, in which we are permitted to look on God as our Father. It is in this atmosphere that He influences us, forms and shapes us. He shapes beautiful souls. And yet how many shipwrecks there are in this bright world of grace! How many Sauls, how many kingly souls, who in the melancholy of sin end in darkness! How many Solomons there are, wise souls like to the cherubim, who fade and are torn to rags! Let us pray and be faithful and true in everything. Do not let us be conceited and presumptuous, but let us work seriously.

(*b*) A new grade of the world of grace and the most beautiful realization of the state of God-with-us is Jesus. God imparted Himself in a new creation: in Jesus. He gives His Son to us, so as to introduce Him into our supernatural blood, our soul and home, and by so doing to give us all. Everything already is ours: "Whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." (1 *Cor.* iii. 22.) It is the mark of Christ's love, the kiss of Christ upon us. By this we are grafted into God, and the Holy Ghost resides in us. He made friends of us, but even after this it is possible for us to perish. He made us His Apostles and we can degenerate into Judases. He ordained His martyrs to be His bodyguards and behold it was during martyrdom itself that some denied Him. He cultivated virgins for Himself and they became adulterous, wanton souls. The sad secret of all these falls is unfaithfulness. We will be faithful and true in small things ; and not give way to evil.

(*c*) Finally God imparts His glory. He carries souls up to Himself and kindles His life and joy in them. "*Merces magna nimis*," they will have an unspeakably great reward. This apotheosis and the intoxication of souls with the infinite is opposed by eternal night and in it the dark spirits scare us ! He thrust away His defamed betrothed ones and destroyed His violated churches. He did not cast away anyone who did not himself desire it. We guard our faith and state of grace ; we will not dispute about who will be damned and who not, but we will assure our salvation with the pledge of the love of God.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

"*And many of the Jews were come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet him ; but Mary sat at home. Martha therefore said to Jesus : Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*" (*John* xi. 19.)

(*a*) The restless, busy Martha hurries to meet the Lord and she complains : Master, thy house is orphaned : Where Thou always camest with love, there they are now weeping. Oh, why didst Thou not come earlier ? And how can illness, suffering, and death come to the house where Thou art at home? Thou lovest and yet strikest us? This we do not understand. It is difficult for us to reconcile trouble, evil, and suffering with the love of God. We do not understand this hand of iron. We are pressed into the iron net of physical order, and moral order also is filled with the horror of evil will! O Lord, we pay Thee homage in life and death. Life and death are our conditions of existence, but Thou hast other conditions. Thou sayest: My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways; existence is not only humanity; humanity is only something in infinity. It is impossible that everything should go according to its ideas and taste. Lord, we adore Thee in Thy holy will!

(*b*) "*Jesus saith to her: Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him: I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life.*" There is death and there is suffering; these we cannot obliterate but at the end of the world souls will again take to themselves bodies. Now they assume bodies through a physiological medium; then they will do so directly by the will of God. Purified souls will be strong and penetrate the body, so that the body will be their bright, beautiful, symmetrical, lively organ. Even now art forms material into shape and gives beauty and soul to the shapeless; resurrection will be the real spiritualisation of matter; the soul overfloods it unhindered with its spiritual beauty and strength. This we believe; we see how in hypnotism and magnetism the soul bends the body and divests it of its nature. What then of the final and victorious awakening? We also are artists of the body through virtue; it is by purity, temperance, self-control and discipline that we carry soul into our body.

(*c*) "*When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing him, she fell down at his feet, and saith to him: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*" In the soul of the deeply feeling Mary, who is immersed in quiet grief, the news that the Master is present and is calling her, trembles like sunshine. The Master is her consolation; she immediately falls down at His feet; this is her place. Whether she weeps for her sins, adores the risen one, or tells Him her sorrow, she is always at His feet. How her soul bent towards the Master, how it clung to Him. This is what the true followers of Jesus do; whether they cry or rejoice, they always love.

(*d*) "*Jesus therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews . . . weeping, groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself. And said: Where have you laid him? . . . And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said: Behold how he loved him.*" Jesus loves, mourns, and weeps. His soul looks across the world into infinity: He sees our misery, but does not break down beneath its weight, for He also sees the final development, sees the glory of God. The conquering power of God embraces the world and all its troubles. For us it is good that we do not know the future; we could not bear the foresight of our fatigue and failures. And so we go on striving and accomplishing our duty. Let us be men, be human, let us live as among brothers; let us be able to weep and share in the troubles of others. The barbarians have no compassion; Christian heroes can weep.

(*e*) "*Jesus therefore . . . cometh to the sepulchre.*" The funeral is a work of mercy; it breathes reverence for the dead one, who robes himself in the dignity of death, in mystery . . . Let us accompany the pilgrim. His soul has passed along a long and important way towards the eternal gates; maybe it is present at the funeral. When we bury someone let us proceed according to the last article of the Apostolic Creed. We believe in the unity of the Saints, therefore we pray for the deceased; we believe in the resurrection of the body, therefore we honour the body in its burial; and we believe in eternal life, therefore we hope that perpetual light will shine upon him. Amen!

(*f*) "*Jesus said: Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to him: Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days. Jesus saith to her: Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?*" The glory of God will triumph over all our conceptions and break all our small measures. In death it also crushes everything, the body, the figure, beauty and life. The body becomes decomposed and falls into decay. "When man dies, he falls a prey to the worms." This is the end of the glory of man and it is here that God begins to build His glory! O Lord, let us see Thy glory, which is life; that is what we want!

(*g*) "*They took therefore the stone away. And Jesus lifting up his eyes said: Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*" Jesus knows the deceased will be raised from death, therefore He gives public expression of His knowledge. He knows that His word creates and gives life, because God wills it so. Absorbed in the knowledge of this divine force, He lifts up His eyes.

The grave gives forth a smell of decay; weak men, the booty of death, surround His victorious figure. He ought to be their leader. Oh, if they would believe, if they would not doubt! Therefore He cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth." And he that was dead came forth. Faith, strength, and conviction is wanted in us also concerning the great works of God. Whether we stand above a grave, or at the altar, we must know whom we trust; we must know that we will not be shamed. Many believe; Lazarus, Martha, and Mary fall down at His feet: this is their unequalled, personal Easter. What a return of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, with Jesus amidst them! Bethany, house of sweet, consoled, thankful souls. In the attachment to Jesus there is none like them. This house encloses depths, encloses souls living in ecstasy.

AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS

At the grave of Lazarus. We believe in Thee! We believe the reality of the ideal world!

(*a*) The aim of progress is to subject the world to superior souls, to raise our existence above mechanism. But to achieve this, our ideals must have substance; our ideas about God, soul, and morality must not be empty, vain reflections! Could we endure it, if after having conquered the elements and Nature, we established infinite emptiness and nothingness? No, we could not; all that we mean by science and economic and social progress concerns only our exterior life; are our interior life and consciousness to be sheer hallucination? On the contrary, this is the true reality: our soul, our God, our eternal life. What barbarism it is to seek the value of life in money and power, in factories, markets and inns, in the formalities of life. We seek for it in the soul and find it!

(*b*) We believe in the moral order. That confronts us and commands and what it commands that is what we wish and are capable of. Our life blossoms forth from our inner world, therefore it is we who give it form; give form equally to our sufferings and joys. We hall-mark everything; what we love, that is great, what we despise is small. Our surroundings may do us much harm, but concerning these we have also to awake to the consciousness of our strength. It is from us that life, that moral strength, breaks forth; we are the artists, we are the creators. Everything we touch changes to moral force, as everything King Midas touched changed to gold. We change everything into life, into beauty. We look into our soul, as into the depths of bubbling wells, which rise and ebb. In our soul nature and grace are united, and what we are not capable of by nature we can achieve by grace.

(*c*) The soul and carrier of our moral world is freedom; it is the most original trait of our likeness to God. We take our decisions from ourselves; we will them and they exist. This creating force cannot be measured with anything, just as the ideas of Newton and Leibnitz cannot be explained from the nourishment they took, so freedom cannot be explained by physics. With this original, sovereign capability we honour Our Lord: (1) in our faith. We believe, that is, we cling to Him with free devotion in our spiritual world; (2) along the whole line of our consciousness we do what the Lord wishes.

JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS

"*And as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off.*" (*Luke* xvii. 12.)

(*a*) Lepers, distorted, shrivelling men, in whom the sap of life has rotted and whose consciousness is filled with agony. Joyless is their life, and they totter faintly towards their grave. There is not a more deplorable contrast than that between these living-dead and strong, beautiful, pure humanity. There are many "*lepra*" in the spiritual world; the energy of many lives produces only degenerate life: low, dark ideas, unclean imaginations, stunned, desperate wills, ideas, whims. . . . Some are as though they could not do otherwise; as if tape-worms were sucking their spiritual strength. How true it is that these are spiritually dead, they live in the graves of dark ideas; their blood is as oil upon the flames of passion. Pure blood is wanted! Do not let us poison pure, strong life either with sin or alcohol. Let us give it light, suppleness, discipline, obedience, and willingness.

(*b*) "*And lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us.*" They beg for purification and strength; they ask for life which is not tainted; for a soul which is not infatuated and dejected. We feel how these creatures wept and cried out to Jesus. . . . They stood afar off, it is from there that they cried out, but reverence and humility brought their cry close to Jesus. The humble, respectful soul which profoundly feels its iniquities finds its way to the healing, restoring Jesus. He gives grace which changes ideas and passions, gives confidence and initiates the spiritual reform. Do not let us doubt, but let us cry out. Already this is a strong deed, the rest will follow.

(*c*) "*Whom when he saw, he said: Go, shew yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean.*" The cleansed lepers had to show themselves to the priests; the law demanded this. The master of beautiful, strong life places his followers under the restrictions of the valid law. Divine law helps and guards life. Therefore, however strong and beautiful is the life we lead and though we are in connection with Christ, we keep the law, we show ourselves to the priest; we confess, and go to Holy Communion and to Mass; we do not excuse ourselves from these duties. Jesus wishes it, we believe that it is good. Through this obedience we win life, we enhance life, we become healed, we get stronger, and we partake of the innumerable graces of Christ.

ONLY ONE PRAISES GOD FOR HIS CURE

"*And one of them when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks: and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said: Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger.*" (*Luke* xvii. 17.)

(*a*) We have to give thanks, to give thanks from our heart for the many good things we have received, which are showered upon us as the snowflakes. We cannot count them; they fly in our faces as the breath of the forest, who knows from how many and what sort of flowers! We will not be conceited and presuming but draw this breath in and enjoy it. Oh, how good it is to know how much good we enjoy when we are healthy and strong, when we see the light of the sky, and all our senses and capabilities are fresh and whole. And especially so when our soul is strong and supple. It is true that sometimes we lay claim to all these things and forget that they are favours. What if we had broken our leg, or badly injured our hand? What if we were blind or lame, either in our body or in our soul? O my God, we give Thee thanks for the innumerable good things, for the fragments of Thy heaven falling down upon us!

(*b*) Thanks for the many unrecognized and unused bounties! Those are like the goods enjoyed by children—they are like passing clouds! Oh, indeed, we are also children, we sleep in the lap of our mother; we also are careless and negligent souls, whose many graces accuse us of not making use of them. We draw down the clouds on us by the height of our ideas; by our ardour, humility, and the forest-breath of our absorption. We will avoid feebleness and be diligent and exact by making use of the good we receive.

(*c*) Thanks for the graces we ignore and despise in the state of sin. Those already are offended powers—the goddesses of anger. Out of the depth of this misery of ours confusion and shame confront us. *Mea culpa!* "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that has bought thee? hath he not made thee? and established thee?" (*Deut.* xxxii. 6.) Let our gratitude be ardent and inspired by love, let it be humble and from the knowledge of our sinfulness and undeservingness and from the knowledge of the sublimity of God, let it be practical. Our life should be a "*Deo gratias.*"

THANKSGIVING AFTER CONFESSION

Thanksgiving after Confession.

(*a*) Deep souls are thankful; they comprehend that the good has to be received with the feeling of gratitude. This too is a great good. Thanksgiving after Confession is a great grace and the means of obtaining lasting effects from the sacrament. Our heart feels the immense graciousness of God's forgiveness; it feels that He has lifted the load off it which was more terrible than fetters; He has washed us in His blood; lifted us, crowned us, and glorified us. Oh, who comprehends the mysterious activity of grace which flowed into us and awoke our soul to a new spring, to eternal life? Therefore "*canet juxta dies juventutis suæ*"; we sing the hymn of youth. It is to this that we educate ourselves exactly and faithfully.

(*b*) The sweet feeling of peace pervades our soul—the deep, sublime peace which God has promised, something of what the Prophet speaks of: "O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! thy peace had been as a river, and thy justice as the waves of the sea." (*Isaiah* xlviii. 18.) This is what we enjoy, this is what makes our soul enthusiastic and our disposition sweet. This is what we have to give thanks for, sing, and be grateful!

(*c*) We give thanks with the deep feelings of our heart; we give our soul. God has broken the fetters of our sins; now we are free to give ourselves to Him. This act of devotion is our gratitude. The Count of Toblach had one of his enemies locked up in a dungeon of his castle and forgot about him, so that the wretched man died of hunger. The Count went to Rome to beg remission for his sin; he had a heavy iron chain forged around his neck and feet and walked about with this till the end of his life. What joy he would have had if the angel of God had lifted this heavy iron chain off him as a sign of the remission of his sins! What thanks he would have given! God has lifted our chains off us; we sing, rejoice and are grateful!

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

"*And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint. Saying: There was a judge in a certain city, who feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city, and she came to him, saying: Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a long time. But afterwards he said within himself: Although I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me, I will avenge her, lest continually coming she weary me. And the Lord said: Hear what the unjust judge saith. And will not God revenge his elect who cry to him day and night: and will he have patience in their regard? . . . He will quickly revenge them.*" (*Luke* xviii. 1.)

(*a*) Jesus wishes us to pray with the perseverance of deeply-feeling, distressed souls. The poor, dejected widow on whom difficulties are heaped, is the symbol of the soul. Let it beg and persevere, although help tarries; let it strive towards the Lord, shedding tears, spreading out its arms; and we must not let it languish. The value of this disposition does not primarily consist in receiving what we beg for; that is often impossible; but it consists in clinging to God, in longing for Him. For the praying soul practises its faith and hope and develops its trust, humility, and patience. In this way our disposition will be a great longing; we breathe in God.

(*b*) The hard judge shows the feelings of a man who has turned away from God: not to fear God, not to regard men; not to pay homage to the Lord and to be cruel to men; not to bend the knee and to tread upon men with an iron heel. It is easy to despise man; to look at men as dust-heaps is the temptation of the mighty ones; but if he gives way to that temptation then his heart becomes hard as a stone and his self-esteem disappears accordingly. Let us love ourselves in every man; our self-esteem shall impel us to raise the weak and abandoned. How much more so if we see Christ in them!

(*c*) "*I say to you that he will quickly revenge them. But yet the son of man when he cometh, shall he find, think you, faith on earth?*" The cruel judge at last takes mercy on the poor woman; but he does so only from natural motives, for he wishes to get rid of her. In many things God helps us by way of natural sympathy, for nature is His work and He links us to each other with the link of natural feelings. But the nobler man is, the less selfish he is, he looks upon everyone as upon his fellow-brother, and this he does true-heartedly, loves them sincerely, loves them for the sake of God and loves them in Him. This is what the world needs, this true charity. This disposition needs living faith, of which there is little in the world. There are not many clinging, longing, praying souls, for faith is scarce. Men's senses become dulled in the world; they seem to be in a perpetual state of winter sleep. The spiritual awakening, deep vistas, the light of God, the spring of soul-life, the feeling of nearness to God, are not in them.

Let us tend the life of faith with prayer and prayer with faith. Prayer comes from faith, and faith from prayer; prayer is the wave of faith, which deepens faith anew. We believe and pray!

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

"*Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks, that I am not as the rest of men . . . as also is this publican. And the publican standing afar off would not so much as lift up his eye towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner.*" (*Luke* xviii. 10.)

(*a*) They went to pray, that is they wanted to sink into the depths of their consciousness, to beg God for the forgiveness of their sins, to rise to His love and grace, so that they might be filled with sunshine and strength and going back amidst men they might spread good-will and self-sacrificing love amongst their fellow-men. This is the result of prayer. The Pharisee did not achieve this, haughtiness and conceit filled him with blindness instead of sunshine and led him away from God. He forgot his sins and forgot prudent fear. The publican achieved the regeneration of his soul in spite of his sins, for his repentance was humble. He who looked at himself so as to despise others, did not see God; he who for shame of seeing himself, cast down his eyes, saw the Lord and found His grace. Behold, we are near to the Lord in our humility; but we divest grace and prayer of its strength if we are filled with self-conceit!

(*b*) The Pharisee is no brother but conceited and arrogant, who despises the sinner and drives a wedge between men and the law and good deeds. He does not cry from out the depths of life, for his mind is occupied with trivialities; church-going and tithe-paying are his ideal. What formality! We must take heed that arrogance shall not grow great from our poorly deeds. What good deeds are those which kill brotherliness, harden the heart and render it cruel? Haughtiness and disdain exclude the good and the "good" we do in this way is only formal and valueless!

(*c*) The publican teaches us humility. He stands afar off, casts his eyes down, and smites his breast. His soul is filled with the knowledge and feeling of his own misery and he seeks the grace of God. Deep reverence for God, the altar, the church, is reflected in him; he had no time to think of unimportant, small things. In his soul he heard the roar of infinite waves; he had no time to attend to the chirp of crickets. He saw the final danger which threatened his hope and repentance and he cried out: God, be merciful to me a sinner. Behold how deeply the soul ploughs with the grace of God; how the dignity of serious thought comes to the surface and teaches him reverence, repentance, self-forgetfulness without lessening his trust in God. Those who act in this way will be justified.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

"*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Who answering, said to them: Have ye not read, that he who made man from the beginning, made them male and female?*

And he said: For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife." (*Matt.* xix. 3.)

(*a*) The most intimate union between human beings is marriage; it is a legal formality, but it has to be filled with soul, morality, love, intimacy, reverence, and passion. St. Paul wishes it to contain deeper and stronger contents than the Song of Songs. He says: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loves the Church. The glow of passionate love may slowly fade away, but strong, ardent, sacrificial love must never fade in marriage. This love ensures the high moral standard of marriage. But its holy character exceedingly enhances marriage and stamps it with a divine, mysterious stamp. God reverences this alliance and places it within the radiation of his graces. Marriage is therefore a great, holy, divine idea, which enhances man and woman and imparts to their union a divine character and a holy dignity. We honour marriage as the treasure and Sacrament of Christ. We wish it to contain love, devotion, spiritual union, and friendship. Without these there is no happy home and no sturdy children.

(*b*) "*And they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.*" The Christian form of sexual relation is marriage. Without this, sexual relation is sinful and strays step by step to what is base because of the predominance of the sensual. The conflict between the longing for sexual union and virtue is one of the greatest that afflicts humanity. Instinct is strong and incites to the use of every means so as to be satisfied. Woman cajoles man with beauty and charm, whereas with her also not the flesh but the beautiful, noble, conscious soul ought to be predominant. Only souls are capable of the most intimate union. Therefore soul has to approach soul.

On the paths of merely fleshly desire and infatuation souls cannot meet. It is a fact that by her union with man, except in Christian marriage, the woman loses her honour and her influence over him. Man shall seek first of all soul in the woman, and the woman shall wish to give firstly her soul to man. This sentiment breaks down the vehemence of instinct and enables them to accomplish the holy will of God.

(*c*) "*What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*" Marriage also has some essential requirements, which when they actually do not exist render "marriage" null, and the Church nullifies it or rather declares it as null. Further, the Church may annul valid marriage if it has not been consummated. It is a psychological contradiction to love till to-morrow, a sacrilege to be united and not to persevere till the death of each. Sacramental love renders people capable of lifelong loyalty, which is not broken by illness, nor troubled by the diminishing of sensual attachment. This the child, the dignity of human origin, also demands that it be not entrusted to instincts and feelings but to the faithfulness and devotion unto death of two souls. Sacrifice and self-abnegation is needed everywhere, and even where the most beautiful love exists there surely not only flowers but thorns also flourish. Complete devotedness also is able to suffer, strive, and persevere. Love and sacrifice spring from the magnanimity of Christian spouses. Let the sacrifice also be divine, sacramental; let it be a holy mystery, then we shall be able to bear it.

(*d*) "*Because Moses by reason of the hardness of your heart permitted you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*" The basis of marriage is love; its content is the fusion of two beings, the fusion of man and woman who complete each other physiologically and psychologically; its fruit is the child. A complete union in soul, flesh, and blood; indeed it is one of the most sublime ideas of God. Let there not be anything therefore which separates man and woman, especially let there be no separation in faith and eternal hope. A mixed marriage is a sad married life, for the spouse is wanting in complete devotion either to the other spouse or to the faith. If he lives according to his faith, then he wishes to give the soul of his wife a share of his salvation, for it is natural that he wishes to draw the one he loves best into his faith and love of God! It is out of such a union, based on God's will to create and on mutual respect, that the child should come; it has to originate from noble love, pure blood, and strong health; perversity, the heat of drink, and sensual weakness shall not approach the sources of life. He who poisons these sources is a monster!

VIRGINITY AND CELIBACY

"*His disciples say unto him: If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry. Who said to them: All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given.*" (*Matt.* xix. 10.)

The psychology of the virginal souls is the noblest, for it has an aptness for the *most tender* and the *strongest* love of God.

(*a*) For the love of God is a union also, a devotion and fusion, for which virginity has the most direct vocation upon this earth. For such a soul belongs to Him: "My beloved one is mine." Further, the love of God is there where passion flames towards God and where the individuals are capable of loving "from all their heart, all their mind and all their soul." The mind turns towards the Lord in complete virginal purity; it turns its face towards Him and its eyes shine: "*Intelligam in via immaculata* . . ." my mind is filled with light upon the paths of pure life . . . these are the "seeing ones"; they have senses, for they possess love: : "*videre amare est*," those see, who love.

(*b*) Likewise, there is no love stronger than the love of pure hearts, for it is they who are able to love "*ex toto corde*." This is what Jesus wishes: My son, give me thy heart. . . . Rose, thou wilt be My betrothed . . . says He to St. Rose. In His turn Jesus receives such a soul with His whole heart; He incarnates Himself into it; He builds His altar in such a heart. It is into such a love that the "psyche," the "animus" is suffused. Let us love our God "*ex toto animo*"; with our temperament and sensibility; this will draw our entire being towards the heavens, "*avolare facit mentem*."

(*c*) The Lord wished to breathe the character of this virginal love into His clergy. This is the idea of the *cœlibatus*. Let the "chosen" clergy, the clerus, belong to the Lord. And the spirit of the Church felt that this befits it. Its eyes fell on the first altar of the Word which became flesh—on the heart of the Holy Virgin—it beheld the first carrier of God and saw that the duty of touching God had been entrusted to the hands of the Holy Virgin and the Church felt that its clergy must be created on this model. It is this virginal clergy which is the ambition of the Church. It loves to weave lilies into its purple cloak.

It longs for the pure souls which make an offering of life. It feels that the world is sick and that the waters of Bethesda can only be stirred by angels so as to make them healing waters. *Ecce ego* . . . *ecce ego* . . . behold, my Lord, here I am, I wish to be pure. Help me!

THE DIVINE FRIEND OF CHILDREN

"*Then were little children presented to him, that he should impose hands upon them and pray.*" (*Matt.* xix. 13.)

(*a*) True parental love brings the infants to Jesus. Those parents who love in this way accomplish the most important duty of child-love. It has to be accomplished in other ways also; we have to love, educate, and tend our children; God wishes it: He wrote it into the heart of the parents. He wishes us to educate them sensibly and to understand the awakening spiritual world in which the child expresses itself in its good and bad qualities. The bad we break down, educate it in discipline, shape and mould it and make it love the good. Otherwise let children rejoice in frolic and play; we must not let heartless severity and cares descend upon the soul of the child as the frost of May. To avoid the latter we work and make sacrifices; the children shall not notice that the sweet milk is our meat and the fresh bread our hard care. They are not able to love us, as we love them; when they grow up and have children, they will realize what their father and mother were to them and they will pray for them.

(*b*) "*And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for such the kingdom of heaven is.*" Jesus loves children because of their pure soul, and we can add: He loves youth, loves the noble, pure, brave flowering of life. He and youth are for one another. He is meant for youth, because strong, divine life is seen in Him; they are meant for Him because they are flowering and Jesus also is from Nazareth, which means "flowering." Their heart swells, there is soul in them, and Jesus also introduces Himself in this way: the Soul of the Lord is upon me. What a brave, strong soul He possesses, a soul which longs to struggle. He walks "in the strength of the soul," loves mountains and forests, longs for the depth of the ocean, walks upon waves. If we draw His image well, then we cannot say that it is unfamiliar or that it contradicts our vital force and joys; on the contrary it renders them purer and nobler. To such a Jesus youth does not only return after dismays, defeats, and disappointments, but remains always with Him; rejoices with Him, amuses itself and plays with Him; for it looks upon all this as upon the divine idea and will.

(*c*) "*And when he had imposed hands upon them, he departed from thence.*" He did not take the children away from their parents; He wished them to be brought up fearing God, loving Him, to be brought up in good cheer and to ripen for the seriousness of life. Each one will in time find his own vocation according to his disposition, inclination, and circumstances. And for whatever vocation he is preparing himself let him do so with the consciousness that tells him that the hand of Jesus blessing him is upon him. Let not only the priest and nun feel themselves near to Jesus but those preparing for worldly professions as well as the youths entering upon marriage. Let these as well as those bear in mind that they are fulfilling the designs of God; both are led by God. Those who practise a worldly profession or those who long for married life have both the service of God as their life in front of them. It is the will of God and He will bless us for our work!

THE SPIRIT OF DEVOTION

Every child besides love has to have reverence towards God; religion takes care of the reverence for God. But just as love was inspired to *piety* by fine spirituality, so in religion it built up *devotion.* Piety is that love with which the soul embraces the Lord; devotion is that reverence with which it honours Him.

(*a*) There are many kinds of devotion. *Devovere* means as much as to hand over. Firstly man gives himself over to man ready for his service. Devotion is the devotedness of the servant for his lord. Devotion is the devotedness of the lay-sister for her dear ailing ones; she lives for them! Devotion is the winter service of the monks of St. Bernard living on the summit of the Alps. Devotion is the attachment of the king's servants who are prepared to give their lives for him. Similarly we can hand ourselves over to the Lord in different ways: by keeping the commandments, by love and faithfulness which are utterly absorbed in God. But we do not call the good, noble, virtuous life "devotion"; devotion is devotedness in the service of God, in the liturgy. This is the devotion which has built the churches and altars, this has made the dogmas flourish into feasts; it decorated the service of God with the creeping rose-wreaths of ceremony, with living wreaths; it inspired artists, brought forth grand conceptions . . . its altars smoke with clouds of incense at the *Introitus* and the *Offertorium* back to the hecatombs of Solomon and from there back again to the sacrifice of Abel. This devotion prays and sings, it steps to the altar and its *toga* changes to the *alba* of many folds, the *pallium* to *stola* and *casula* as it performs the service of God. To reverence God is our duty and consolation and this we are able to do in seclusion, as well as in public. Let us conceive the public service of God as a great interest, as an important one; let it be one of the consecrations of public life. Let us willingly go to Holy Mass and as far as it is in our power help to enhance its grandeur.

(*b*) And what shall be the character of our devotion? "*Prompta voluntas ad divini cultus actus exercendos*," willing, ardent, persevering will, attention, and devotion in accomplishing the service of God. This "prompt" will does not only build churches, but decorates and sweeps them; it enhances the splendour of the service of God; it willingly bends the knee; it partakes of Holy Communion with zeal and folded hands; it reverences the customs and functions of the Church; its eyes and face before the altar are like the everlasting light that glows thereby. A correct Holy Communion is a shining example. There is no religion where there is no devotion; devotion is the prayer of religion.

(*c*) Where does devotion come from? "*In meditatione mea*" the fire ignites in meditating souls. Where shall the willingness of the will come from? . . . "*Voluntas ex intelligentia*"; it comes from seeing Jesus . . . this sweet incorporation of all that is strong and beautiful, "*qui dulci vita inescat*," who fascinates us by His life and who is able to live so sublimely for Himself and induces us also to live for ourselves. His shadow is cast upon us; the impression of His personality and individuality is inextinguishable and it is in this proximity that our convictions and resolutions blossom forth, we have our spring. "*Memor fui Dei et delectatus sum*," Thy remembrance is our joy and in Thy presence we become Thy "devoted" creations. We never tire of looking at Jesus as He prays on the mountains of Judea, on Mount Tabor, in the wilderness, and in the temple, and whose prayer is so sublime and so sweet that the Prophets Moses and Elias come down to Him and Angels serve Him. What sublime "assistance"! Their soul is a flaming torch; their heart is full of incense!

JESUS AND THE RICH YOUNG MAN

"*And when he was gone forth into the way, a certain man running up and kneeling before him, asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting? And Jesus said to him . . . Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal . . . But he answering, said to him: Master, all these things I have observed from my youth. And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him: One thing is wanting unto thee: go, sell whatsoever thou hast . . . and come, follow me. Who being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looking round about, saith to his disciples: How hardly shall they, that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God!*" (*Mark* x. 17-23.)

(*a*) A representative of sin-free youth runs to Jesus filled with love and enthusiasm, and Jesus looks upon him with the ecstasy of His soul. He is pleased with the youth;

rejoices that the youth comes to Him, rejoices in the revelation of his soul, which longs for eternal life. He encourages and calls him: Approach, come nearer and nearer and if thy heart is in the right place, attach thyself to Me, thou canst become My apostle. This is the way of the Lord. Let us obey His call; transitoriness is a torture to us, it does not satisfy us; God, life, and happiness are what we want.

Incomprehensibility is a torture, also unaccomplished, aimless existence, and as transitoriness and the incomprehensibility of existence cannot be conquered by science or culture but only by faith, therefore we attach and bind ourselves to the Lord in faith. We bind ourselves to Him not as to a notion, but as to the source of existence and to the key of comprehension. It is for this reason that there are unity and fertility in our existence. For this reason we willingly keep the commandments. We wish to grow and develop, to become like Jesus Those who go towards Him move among denials, renunciations, restrictions, move continually among "noes," but these "noes" contain a forcible "yes"; these restrictions are the limits of beauty. When we deny ourselves we break off a piece of nature for the sake of spiritual beauty and strength. This is the philosophy of renunciation.

(*b*) "*All these things I have observed from my youth.*" It is a great grace when God calls "*a juventute mea*" and when someone understands this call. This consciousness is heaven on earth. Let us love, reverence, and keep the commandments. The soul does not gain in substance from the outer commandments and laws, but law and commandment direct the soul and help its expressions of life to consciousness; they help to shape the inner beauty.

Law is only asserted when it becomes embodied in our own will. In this way law and morality become our property, they are something that we will and experience. In this way our benefit and goodwill become ideals which fill us, enrich us, and make us happy. The will of God is an immeasurable force and happiness and by doing it we change it into our own, into our own strength and happiness. If we wish for strength and happiness, let us accomplish the divine will. Jesus will look upon us with pleasure and will love us.

(*c*) "*Who being struck sad at that saying* . . ." He was sad for he looked only at the renunciation. Those who in the Christian life look only at renunciation and the fetters of the law have not yet experienced the hidden beauties in it. They see only barriers in the shapes and only denial in the outlines. But is the outline of the Madonna-face denial? That also is a barrier, a boundary, but this barrier and boundary come from the inspiration of harmony, come from an inner lawfulness. Every form and law has to start from our will and love, then it becomes our morality. We may come into collision with our inclinations and passions—which are blind, shapeless, immoral—but this does not matter. With trusting love we encircle the beautiful shape and change it to our value and beauty. In this way we experience strength, we enjoy it and rejoice in it; we become lordly, kingly, Christ-like. "In the heart of those who believe in Me living waters, forces and joys gush forth."

(*d*) "*And Jesus looking round about.*" He also was grieved and sighed: Oh, how difficult it is even for such a pure youth to wake from the mirage of riches! Let every rich man feel that he is in danger, in the danger of frivolity, idleness, heartlessness, cruelty, envy, and conceit. He can easily be disappointed; he believes himself to be free, whereas he is a captive; he comes to love money and forgets that it is only given to him on trust. O my Lord, we love nothing as much as our soul and its freedom! Who knows but that the youth afterwards became frivolous and squandered his life in luxury and idleness. To how many have riches brought evil! Instead of living for serious work they spend their time in foolish pleasures.

THE REWARD OF THOSE WHO LEAVE ALL FOR THE LORD

"*Then Peter answering, said to him: Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have?*" (*Matt.* xix. 27.)

(*a*) "We have forsaken all," says Peter, forsaken our hut, fishing-net, boat, everything. Not riches, position, and rank but what might have hindered us from joining ourselves to Thee. What will therefore become of us? Ye will be kings and judge worlds! To renounce everything is a great deed; who does this will be glorified and shame the world attached to the clod of earth, to inclinations and joys. We have to renounce: (1) all that leads and tempts us to sin. (2) We have to practise self-denial with the intention of promoting in ourselves spirituality, freedom, and nearness to God. We come nearer to God by the various steps of self-denial; these are the steps of our kingly throne. Let us continually and confidently ascend them.

(*b*) "*And Jesus said to them: Amen I say to you, that you,* *who have followed me . . . and every one that hath left house . . . or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting.*" The Gospel does not only urge renunciation and devotion where the Apostles are concerned, but urges everyone to renounce himself for the sake of God. Renunciation is good; breaking away from the earth is the way of great souls. We cannot remove this feature from the Gospel. Maybe parents, husbands, and wives take these declarations of Christ amiss and find them pitiless, but let them not take offence at them. We make a sacrifice of the flesh for the sake of the soul; in life and health we likewise make sacrifices for the sake of riches and knowledge. How much more ought we to be willing to give up everything to win perfection. Do not let us believe the tepid who would draw us away from sacrifice; do not let us listen to the syrens, to the sentimental idealists, who encourage us "to let ourselves go and live life to the full." There is no culture of spirit without strength and sacrifice. The longing for pleasure draws after it the degeneration of the people. Therefore we have to educate ourselves to the conquering of this feeling.

(*c*) The supernatural life demands sacrifices still more urgently than our natural life. Let us make these sacrifices with the deep feeling of doing them for God, for the sake of the Sublime. This is our glory, if we are able to give and do anything for His glory. Great is our debt; let us be grateful if out of gratitude we are able to offer Him something. Dreadful and terrible is the immensity of what we owe Him; let us feel happy, if by way of compensation we are able to renounce something. The Count of Brabant went with the army of crusaders to the Holy

Land and took his wife with him and whilst he was in battle his wife nursed the sick in Jerusalem. After a time he had to return to his country, but his wife asked leave of him to remain there so as to be able to continue serving God and the sick. " How could I leave you ? " said the Count. " I cannot live without you." But she went on begging him. Finally the matter came before the patriarch and he, being deeply touched by the ardour of the woman, also asked the Count to let his wife remain. And when even that was of no use and the Count was still reluctant, then the patriarch offered the Count a drop of the Blood of Christ dried on a stone—a relic from the Church of Jerusalem—in exchange for his wife. This had its effect. For this treasure the Count renounced the treasure of his heart. What is it we would not likewise do for the Blood of Christ, for grace, for resemblance to Christ ?

PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

" *The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. . . . And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market place idle.*" (*Matt.* xx. 1.)

(*a*) The kingdom of God is love of work and activity. God encourages us in this and He pays us for it. He wishes us to work, wishes us to put our strength into labour ; this demands strength and soul ; health and good cheer. Enthusiasm and good cheer carry us on, give us perseverance, and ensure success. Without it life is a yoke. It is in work that our individuality also develops. Through work we discover the hidden treasures of life and further the progress of the world. The fate of the idle is painful and sad : Why stand ye here all the day idle ? The God of force and energy deservedly accuses the idlers of their idleness ; God forbid that this accusation should be meant for us. But it is meant for many ! Meant chiefly for the well-to-do women and the girls of high society who spend their life idly or spoil it with dilettantism ; they are bored and nervous and embittered. Let us stand in the market of the world with a willing heart ; let us feel and experience the many different kinds of trouble of our fellow-brothers, and the word of God will be heard which metes out work to us also.

(*b*) " *Go you also in my vineyard.*" He sends them into His vineyard. The vineyard of God is life with its many different professions and eternal aim. Here everyone works in his own place, within the limits of society, business, family, and institutions. We work for the fulfilment of the designs of God, we work for a better world. Let us do this with consciousness ; whatever we do, let us do it with a noble, elevated, pure idea befitting Christian personality. We have much labour and work and undertakings which will perhaps, as time goes on, appear empty and useless. But let us endeavour to make good use of our strength, so that selfishness, stubbornness, meanness, and prejudice may never move us. Let us put noble individuality into everything so that our recreation may also be a moral deed. Let us do good and let us do good well and under the title of " good " do not let us include only fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, but everything we do with consciousness. Let us often ask ourselves : What are we to do now according to our best knowledge and most noble inclinations ?

(*c*) By working in the "vineyard of God," by working for the fulfilment of His designs, we become His collaborators. God works in everything and we with Him! The nobler and more spiritual the work is, the truer it is that we work with God. The most lovely work of God is man, and all the work in the world goes on in some way for him, but especially that work which directly serves the spiritual world, enlightenment, faith, moral life, and virtue. Let us attach great importance to this fact, and if we have awakened one good feeling in someone, let us believe that the world has become better by this also.

(*d*) "*Who went out early in the morning . . . And going out about the third hour . . . Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour . . . But about the eleventh hour . . .*" God calls us to work at different times; let us be thankful for this call and faithful to grace. Do not let us complain that He called us early, that we endured the heat and burden of the day, whilst others led their life of pleasure. For are we to complain about having awakened to life and our great duties in time—and that we have so soon found substance and depth in our life—or that we have not gone astray and squandered our treasures? This is the greatest benefit, "*a juventute mea vocasti me*," we are happy that Thou hast called us in our early youth! For this, special gratitude is due! Others have been called later. But the Lord calls everyone and is ready to receive them at any time. As long as we live, it is never too late. It is not late whilst we live and even in the twelfth hour we can win eternal life. But it is a waste of time, the time we have not lived for God. If there could be a stain on the memory of the Saints, if a shadow could darken their happiness, then surely it would be the knowledge of lost time! No one shall say: "It is too late," but shall love God and serve Him still more ardently to make up for the time he has lost till now.

(*e*) "*And when evening was come . . . they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more: and they also received every man a penny . . . and they murmured . . .*" It causes a stir amongst the labourers who began work in good time that those who came later receive the same reward. They murmur, they are envious and rebellious. If we apply this to "heaven," which we already enjoy here below, if we love God and love that which we expect in the other world, then this murmur is senseless, for every man's share is different. That belongs to us which we have worked out for ourselves. By "work" we mean the noble, Christ-like life which comes from faith, not outward successes and aspirations. They who have shaped the Christ-like type in themselves, whether after a long or a short time, will obtain salvation. Strictly speaking, there can be no talk of equality, for every man is different. Only in the attainment of our goal, salvation, can we be equal. In the matter of depth and fire, beauty and strength, we cannot be equal. It would be a pity if, loitering about for many years, we got no further than others do in a short time with an equal expenditure of effort. And when Christ lives in us, what are we to be envious of? Every such soul is beautiful! Why should the cowslip envy the forget-me-not? Let us be Christ-like; this beauty is force and joy and life!

THE GREATER AMONG YOU, LET HIM BE YOUR MINISTER

"*You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them: and they that are the greater, exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister.*" (*Matt.* xx. 25.)

(*a*) The spirit of paganism has not known and recognized fraternity; the instinct for power created heartless and cruel categories; it raised potentates to greatness which crushed the weak and increased through their suffering the lowliness of their minds and their hate. Power became a yoke and the reigning force a burden and a drainer of blood. "But it shall not be so among you"; your greatness is to be a joy and consolation to others; spiritual excellence does not crush, but elevates; those who are powerful in spirit, help the weak. It is after this power and greatness that we have to strive; not only not to take something away from others, but to be "all to all" is an aim indeed.

(*b*) "*Even as the son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.*" I came to serve, to serve the intentions of God, to be the servant of the holy will of God. Let everyone say this: the official, the business man, the trader, the manufacturer. We have to endeavour to make our service correspond with Christ-like faithfulness. We have to be aware of the fact that in the fulfilment of our duties as citizens, in our business and industry we serve God, not only by our goodwill, but by the work which the Lord has pointed out to us. This world is His design, which we carry out. In this way life wins dignity and significance. Do not let us think that we cannot carry out our business or industry as a service for God; we can indeed. We must not believe that with this we have to serve the devil. The Christian man of business must be inspired also by the spirit of "service"; let him serve the public according to the ideas of God; the idea of service shall accompany him in the economic strife, so that he continue the work of God with honour, faithfulness, patience, and perseverance.

(*c*) "*But be not you called Rabbi. For one is your master, and all you are brethren.*" (*Matt.* xxiii. 8.) The wish for priority and power can steal in everywhere; into clergy and apostles also. Here also man can seek his own self, and egoism may be hidden in the individuals and corporations consecrated to God. Ye shall not walk upon this track of senselessness. Apostles must forget themselves and devote themselves wholly to the service of their brethren; they shall not wish to rise above them in dignity and titles. Ye shall not be called Rabbis, even if ye are rabbis, ye shall feel and experience that the Church, the Gospel, the Sacraments, and the clergy are for humanity, not for the reputation of individuals or orders. The Christianity of to-day has been stripped by the development of history of many of these Christ-like traits and there are few thinkers "*qui magis agit, quam agitur*," who act independently. The flood of worldly feeling carries and sweeps away many. Lord, give us men in whom the Gospel is not word but life. Give us Apostles who do not live for themselves but for souls.

THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE

"*Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of him. Who said to her:*

What wilt thou? She saith to him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom." (*Matt.* xx. 20.)

(*a*) They come to Jesus with their mother and wish to beg for something, for something that shows such a low and coarse idea of Christ and His work; they want to sit at the side of Christ as the first ones in the earthly kingdom of the Lord. They wish to be lords, great lords such as Pilate and Herod. They appear before the Lord, filled with this longing and confident hope. It is of this lowly idea that the Lord might have said: "Your thoughts are not my thoughts and your ways are not my ways." The difference between them is that of heaven and earth! How often does man similarly accost the Lord; he begs for something, according to the inspirations of his silly, stupid heart—Jesus does not despise His disciples; He listens patiently to their desires and educates them to real greatness. Let the memory of this scene accompany us in our prayers. Let us pray, but endeavour to pray in "His name," according to "His will," so that our prayers should contain sense and truth.

(*b*) Man renders divine intentions as well as "the kingdom of God" itself worldly; with us everything is earthly. With difficulty we familiarize ourselves with the idea that God is Spirit and His works are spiritual, and this is our impediment. The lowly conception of the Jews about the kingdom of God has prevented their conversion. Sensual ideas estranged many in Capharnaum from the Sacrament of the Altar. What are the ideas of men about the soul, resurrection, and heaven? The soul is not flesh, heaven is the existence in God, resurrection the spiritualization of the body. Let us carry as much spirit as possible into the comprehension of the works of God.

(*c*) "*And Jesus answering, said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to him: We can . . . My chalice indeed you shall drink: but to sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father.*" Your first care shall be that ye faithfully follow Me, says Jesus. I do not tell you what awaits you and what it is that I shall later demand of you. I will not tell you now that thou, James, wilt be the first martyr of my Apostles. I do not frighten you, but urge you on to follow Me and imitate My person, and whatever happens to you keep on saying: This is the cup of the Lord, His cup. This we will drink; it is glory to drink it. The rest we shall see. God will give us our place in Heaven in due course. Amen!

THE BLIND BEGGAR

"*Now it came to pass, when he drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying: Jesus son of David, have mercy on me.*" (*Luke* xviii. 35.)

(*a*) What a piteous and frequent sight this is: a blind beggar by the wayside. He does not see the world bathed in heavenly light, neither does he see Christ. How many there are who are blind, who do not know the aim of life and strife, who do not see Christ! Although he sits by the wayside, although he sits upon the road of warfare, and ardent, trusting souls pass by him, souls which are attached to Christ, yet he does not see them. Such a frame of mind is poorly and beggarly even when souls of value swarm around it. The way of warfare is the way of Christianity and the Apostles, and unbelief, scepticism, and immorality border its edges with blind beggars! Let us advance unceasingly! We do not sit down beside the beggars, we do not get into the ditch. We have to act. Christ leads, we follow. The beggars' song is not our song!

(*b*) "*And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked* . . ." He does not see, but he hears; he does not walk, but the enthusiasm of the passers-by comes to his consciousness and he asks who it is who draws on and moves the multitude, who it is who is able to awake so much enthusiasm and fire the crowd. He notices how they cleave to Him, forget house and home, and follow Him. Longing fills his heart, and he says: "Oh, if I could also go with Thee, Christ, if I could but see Thee! If only striving force could be my lot instead of the wayside and inaction! If only I did not have to cling to mud and ditch and live from hand to mouth on alms and charity!" And he cries out: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" We also are to cry out and not to leave off crying. The Lord says to us also: "Follow me!" He draws us on also, He lifts us to Himself, at one time through inner inspiration, at others through nature or by force of circumstance.

(*c*) "*And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me.*" We have to go on crying and not take heed of the world. The world quickly condemns, but also quickly praises it if sees success. We have to love our soul in such a way and so much that we are not allowed to fear even the resentment of others. And Jesus hears us; noise and publicity do not prevent Him stopping and granting the wish of the beggar. He granted it and cured him. The beggar became rich when he saw Christ. He left his rags and the stone he was sitting on and went with the Lord, and with what enthusiasm and devotion! "Once upon a time ye were darkness, and now you are divine light; walk as the sons of light."

JESUS AND ZACHEUS

"*And entering in, he walked through Jericho. And behold there was a man named Zacheus: who was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And running before he climbed up into a sycamore tree that he might see him.*" (*Luke* xix. 1.)

(*a*) He wants to see the mighty, wonderful Man. He does not as yet think of following Him. He stands by the wayside, climbs up a tree, and looks. By this look which curiosity cast upon the Lord as upon an historical personality, Zacheus would not have been changed. He would have seen the Lord, climbed down, and would have gone on living. These unfertile ideas, feelings, and looks . . . are not the seeds of God. Even if they are initiations, they do not create a new world. How many events do we look at; how many books are read by us; we even awake to the consciousness of our tasks . . . there is much seeing, looking, and enthusiasm but all with a great deal of barrenness! The cold, bright ideals impose, but do not give creative, shaping soul!

(*b*) "*And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up, he saw him.*" Jesus looks upon him; Zacheus catches the bountiful glance which penetrates his soul, pervades it, and gilds it. Who could describe this glimpse? It is the in-pouring of God and the imparting of strength. By such a glance the soul is transfigured. We do not recognize Him, if He Himself does not look at us; therefore we beg and implore Him to glance at us, to come, to call us, He the warm, strong life which fills us and loves.

(*c*) "*And said to him: Zacheus, make haste and come down: for this day I must abide in thy house.*" What haste seizes him, it is the soul which breathes in him. He hurries home and breaks away from the rest. In what a new light does he see the street, men, his house and wife! He says a few enthusiastic words here and there, and the rest is told by his glowing face. The excitement of the crowd has now become a festivity within his soul; the Prophet is coming to abide in his house . . . He is here already. How easy it is to serve the Lord when the feeling of great reverence changes to love in us.

(*d*) "*But Zacheus standing said to the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him four-fold.*" Behold he receives the Lord "joyfully" and pays homage to his sublimity with the feelings of the new, transformed man. I was a slave of money; from now on I will not be. I have harmed others; from now on I will make good. Only let me possess Thee, Thy love and appreciation. When bounty, beauty, strength, and life knock at our door, do not let us lock them out but receive them with joy and give way to their power. God gives immeasurably more than He takes; He demands money, flesh, and blood and gives in their stead soul, strength, and joy.

(*e*) "*Jesus said to him: This day is salvation come to this house: because he also is a son of Abraham. For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" It will be our salvation when Jesus enters and we are able to humiliate ourselves, to be enthusiastic, to become purer, to rejoice, and make sacrifices; when our soul throbs with joy and our thoughts soar; when our sentiments expand and when we rise to the heights of purity! Let us make a free passage for these crystal streams! Let no one say that he cannot do it. We are able to love, let us love therefore and make sacrifices. Let us wash and burn out the ignoble and let us believe in the good and in its strength. The friendship of Jesus reforms and saves us!

PARABLE OF THE TEN POUNDS

"*A certain nobleman went into a far country . . . and calling his ten servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them: Trade till I come, and he gave ten pounds to the one, five to the other and one to the third.*" (*Luke* xix. 12.)

(*a*) God gave many different forces and talents and more or less wealth to us. He entrusts us with them and wishes us to make use of them. Concerning wealth he wishes us: (1) To be masters; so that not wealth and riches should possess us but that we should possess them. He wishes our money not to be a dead weight upon our soul, but a tool in our hands for the service of many. We have to be free from its magic so that we may make many free. Soul is wanted in us so that we may raise others. Trade till I come; all this is not finally yours; I ask you to account for it. This feeling of responsibility renders us generous and free. Let us ask ourselves if our wealth is a means or a dead weight? Are we its slaves or administrators?

(*b*) Let us make use of it firstly by practical, honourable, moral investment. To earn means as much as to invest; but let us earn irreproachably, earn in an honourable way. To earn by way of sin and then to wish to do good is loathsome before God. (2) Let us help others with it but help with soul, help as those who collect treasure. "Thou wilt have treasure in heaven"—this is the idea which shall lead us; value therefore the fact of giving alms, love it, and rejoice in it as in the gathering of treasure; do it with humility, without conceit and haughtiness. It is on this frame of mind that the value of your gift depends. The eyes of Jesus glow when He sees the widow's mite. (3) Let us use wealth for ideal aims also, for churches, schools, education, and public institutions. Beautiful churches and peals of bells, sublime pictures and altars are likewise benefits to the fatigued men who seek for spirit, as bread and clothing are to the cold and hungry.

(*c*) Besides wealth and money man is the possessor of soul, gifts, senses, individual qualities. We have to make use of all this. We have to devote ourselves to that task which is our lot according to our position and vocation. What we are, we must live for spiritually. We seek our good deeds firstly in the accomplishment of our duties. Not in alms, in visiting the sick, in fasting; all that is good but not the first, essential thing. First and foremost is the ordinary everyday life which has to consist of good deeds, of a correct way of thinking, of willingness, patience, etc. In the office, in the shop, in the household, we must work with goodwill, good intentions, with steadiness and perseverance. These are both individual and social good deeds. How prudent and happy are those who act in this way! How dull and silly are those who hide the pound given to them, who do not use their talents! Such ones weaken and dull their talents, render their life joyless, and the following words apply to them: "*To everyone that hath shall be given . . . and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him.*"

THE ANOINTING OF JESUS IN BETHANY

"*And when Jesus was in Bethania in the house of Simon the leper. There came to him a woman having an alabaster-box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he was at table.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 6.)

(*a*) Bethany is a dear name, full of the attractive power of Jesus, full of ardent, thankful love. Bethany is a dear home where Jesus was loved, it is the resting place of Jesus and His joy, filled with scents from the salve of Mary. How much we also love this place where Jesus was loved, and we love those who love Jesus. . . . The love of Mary became even deeper after the resuscitation of her brother Lazarus; her thankfulness was fired by the joy of the awakened life, and so when she poured her salve upon the head of Jesus it was not oil she poured upon it but her soul, "She poured out her soul before the Lord." She loved Jesus "as her own soul" and would have given up everything for Him. "She took her soul in her hand" so that she might give it to Him. And Jesus understood her feeling; the love of Mary shone into His soul like a ray of sunshine through the stormy clouds of His approaching sufferings, and consoles Him. He records her act in His Gospel as though to say: "Souls, this is the way ye have to love, to approach, and to touch me . . . that I may find pleasure in you."

(*b*) "*And the disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste? For this might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. And Jesus knowing it, said to them: Why do you trouble this woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.*" She spent the money for a good cause, for the most beautiful and sweetest cause. For the flowers of the meadow are not a waste, they are the art of God. Neither is the blossoming of the heart a waste; the pleasure is worth the expense. All that lifts the soul and ennobles it, that touches the heart and gives warmth, that raises us and fills our dumb, beast-like, instinctive world with superior light and warmth, cannot be bought too dearly. Our joy in nature, art, and, above all, grace, is worth any financial sacrifice. Do not only give bread and clothes to mankind, waste a little salve upon it also; do not give money only but oil, the oil of joy and pleasure. Let us free man from the tread-mill of banality, let us make feasts for him and render his life more beautiful and spiritual.

(*c*) "*Amen I say to you wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told for a memory of her.*" So this also belongs to the good tidings of Our Lord; the Gospel frames the memory of Mary in a glorious, eternal flowery frame. This also is the Gospel, that Jesus loves friendship and rejoices in it. This also is the Gospel, that we have to approach the heart of Jesus with such sweet love. What is the use of anything else if we are ignorant of this? Though the Gospel starts with the preaching of penitence, and Mary has also trod this way, it afterwards announces the good tidings: Love thy Lord God with the love of Mary!

(*d*) "*For she in pouring this ointment upon my body, hath done it for my burial.*" What sorrowful shadows these are upon the soul of Jesus! Suffering is already approaching; a few days separate Him from it; He already takes this anointment as if it was His burial service. But we know that the love of these souls served Jesus as an anointment for His struggles. With His soul He saw those whose love and faithfulness served as a consolation to Him, those for whom He suffered gladly. O my Jesus, we will strive after noble ends; we, too, wish to be Thy consolation.

END OF VOLUME II

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THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

"*The festive entering of Jesus into Jerusalem.*"

(*a*) This is the Palm Sunday of the Lord. Palms and olive branches wave around Him; the scent of spring floats towards Him from the Mount of Olives and the spontaneous enthusiasm of the people gives Him an immediate reception. The heart of Jesus is heavy, His eyes are veiled with tears; worlds divide the thoughts of the Son of God from the cheering of the crowd. But He intended this public manifestation so as to show us that He steps on to the road of His sufferings amidst the spring newness of palm and olive branches; that the palm branch of glory and the olive branch, symbol of peace, indicate the deep meaning of this suffering. Suffering, though it is a burden, is also the source of immeasurable grace! It is with this feeling that we have to be filled; let us derive great graces from suffering and from being despised. The world does not understand these thoughts. Man degrades himself in suffering by his impatience and mistrust! Therefore he hides his suffering, whereas Jesus calls the attention of the world to His; man likes not others to see his humiliation, whereas Jesus wishes that more and more souls should be attracted to this new, great teaching!

(*b*) "*And when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them: Go ye into the village that is over* *against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied and a colt with her: loose them and bring them to me."* (*Matt.* xxi. 1, 2.) The Lord Jesus wishes to enter into Jerusalem on an ass. The ass is the beast of peace, the horse that of combat. The Psalmist also says: They trust in their horses, whereas we trust in the name of the Lord. When the Jews became fighters they began to use horses. Jesus also wants to gain a land for us, the land of eternal happiness, but not on horseback, not on the fields of battle, but by means of the battles of the soul, by means of devotion, sacrifice, and serving love; there is more force and violence here than in the fights of Alexander the Great, of Xerxes, and Napoleon. There are also heroes: "They are bashful as the maidens of the cloister and brave as the lions." "Behold thy king comes for you gently," but thou art able to feel His strength and force and thou canst only follow His tracks by sacrifice and the inspirations of heroism. Hold thy palm and olive branch, wave it and say: "This is how I wish to go, to strive and to conquer." This is the Palm Sunday disposition; an heroic disposition, though there be tears upon the palms. We are allowed to weep, but we must be heroes!

(*c*) How differently the Pharisees receive the Lord! They are angry and envious, they are scandalised and they curse, they see the ruin of the Jewish faith and people. Their narrow ideas do not reach beyond the Jerusalem of their age. How the Lord towers above this unstable, low opinion! The people are led by goodwill, by cheap and unstable enthusiasm, their cry of Hosanna soon dies away. This too is mean and despicable. And yet Jesus willingly receives the homage, and by His example and sufferings sees to it that the homage should be deep, lasting, and faithful. "If these shall hold their peace," He says to the Pharisees, "the stones will cry out." Let our hearts, which are not stones, cry out with the resisting, persevering strength of stones! Let them cry Hosanna and pay homage to the Lord!

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM

"*And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee . . . and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee. . . .*" (*Luke* xix. 41.)

(*a*) The great Lover of our souls is moved to pity and mercy. He sees the ravaged town and fathomless misery, and this it is that fills Him with deep compassion, this it is that makes Him weep; so it is with a passionate, warm, sensitive, and tearful soul that He walks His ways. This is how our soul is to be: sensitive and dewy; passions shall surge in it and wells spring forth from it. We must not aspire to hardness and indifference. As long as there lives a deep feeling in us for the good of souls, no one need be anxious for us; as long as we groan beneath the weight of our vision, we need no support; as long as our apostolic zeal is tempered with the emotion of a friend, we need no prompting; we know sufficient; we have no need of anyone; for as long as we possess these things there is life and strength in us.

(*b*) Jesus yearns and longs, He looks around Him with tearful eyes, anxious to help. He thinks how near the great good is to that hard, merciless, blind world, and He prays: Oh, if thou hadst known that, even on this thy day! Oh, if thou wouldst recognise the time of thy visitation; when the Lord was so near you, when He came and visited you. The Apostolic heart feels the nearness of God; it would like to capture Him for sinful souls, and would like to commit it to their hearts that "this is our day," this is "the time of the visitation of God." Let us open the door for Him, therefore, open the gate, the window; oh, do not let Him pass us by with His grace!

(*c*) And although He yearns and although He weeps, hearts persist in remaining stones, and souls do not open to the knockings of the visiting God! This is true, but we are not to deduct from this that apostolic work is superfluous; we are to continue the work of Christ. There will be hearts which lock themselves and there will be hearts which open if we weep and are ardent. In the tracks of Jesus we see His Apostles who do not say that it is impossible, but they say that "we serve the Lord with all humility, and with tears"; "keeping in memory that for three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you, night and day." (*Acts of the Apostles* xx. 19, 31.)

THE GENTILES WANT TO SEE JESUS

"*Now there were certain Gentiles among them who came up to adore on the festival day. These therefore came to Philip . . . saying: Sir, we would see Jesus.*" (*John* xii. 20.)

Just as history places immortal deeds and facts before men and inspires them thus: Do likewise . . . thou canst also do likewise, in such manner holy Christianity puts Christ before us and encourages us : act, act . . . do the greatest deeds and live with Him in unity, in holy intimacy. I do not wish to make of thee a walking dictionary, but a living, pure-shining soul. Thou wilt have strength for this if thou strivest with all thy might.

(*a*) Embrace the Lord Jesus in thy faith so that He fill thy mind, not only as an ideal from which thou mayest derive the most beautiful principles, but as a real fact. He should be to thee thy God, thy final aim, and thy salvation; whose blood is the price of thy soul, its wage and redemption ; who is not a word and idea about these things but the Word which became flesh ; He is the incarnation of all this. It is not the doctrine which speaks about Him that we need, but it is He Himself, the way He lived, felt, and wished. How often does the longing to see Jesus steal over the inhabitants of the modern world ! But they only look upon Him as Cæsar, or Hannibal, not as the Redeemer, and redeemer of sins ; they do not see Him in this light. They do not experience here and now the sweet, strong Lord. O Jesus, sweet Jesus, I do not wish for the great man, but the real, warm-hearted God-man of the Gospel. *Credo, credo et amo.*

(*b*) We have to strive ; we have not to sing the songs of intimacy in such a way as to forget self-denial and discipline. Otherwise, sweetness of soul would be but self-deception. We have an evil nature which is sensual and inclines towards what is mean. We gravitate towards flesh and blood, and our eyes are easily dazzled at the sight of vanity. We are therefore determined to strive, struggle, and deny ourselves !

(*c*) We have to trust in the Lord and in His grace. We have to pray, and when we pray we have to place ourselves in the unity of fraternity founded by Christ. Many sublime, holy brothers aid us here. We seek God, but we do not despise the tracks with which they trod the way. We pray with the Saints; they also help. As in the picture by Fra Angelico, angels, good souls, and Saints proceed upwards hand-in-hand, so do we endeavour to go forward in intimate unity of soul. But trust is not allowed to be an enfeebling idea; our heart does not weaken our arm and hand.

(*d*) We have to be moderate and patient in our endeavours. We are not allowed to sulk, to be dejected, to be angry, if something does not succeed with us. We are not barbarians; we have no aspirations to become pessimists so as to be disgusted by weakness. We have to be disgusted by sin, but not by the sinner; not by ourselves either. Even if we wish to be purified we are not allowed to exaggerate, as do the sects which introduced distorted forms of penitence.

(*e*) We have to appreciate nature with goodwill and in its own realism; we have to love its force and not break it asunder. The ideal is not that we should beat ourselves till we bleed and become withered by fasting and expiation; and that we should become ailing saints with headaches and other ills. We look upon Jesus and find the right direction. We love nature as the source of strength which serves soul and spirit; we love it as a thought of God, as the marble steps which lead us to the "*Ara coeli*."

(*f*) We have passionately to long for the life of the soul, for development, for the nobler, better man.

"*Vitam petiit a te et tribuisti ei . . .*" he demanded life of Thee and Thou gavest it. This is Thy gift, this life. Thy grace is the fuller, divine life; Thy reward is eternal life. This longing will not wither us and we shall not tire of it. To the question of the Duke of Aosta "What is happiness?" the shepherd-boy of Savoy replied, "Health and peace." We may amplify that answer thus: Happiness is the healthy, peaceful, complete life in which God and the soul have conquered and transfigured flesh, blood, senses, and the world. This is what we need.

JESUS CASTS THE MONEY-CHANGERS OUT OF THE TEMPLE

"*And when he was entered into the temple, he began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves . . . saying to them: Is it not written, My house shall be called the house of prayer of all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves.*" (*Mark* xi. 15.)

(*a*) Jesus is a glowing soul; He loves and pays homage to God out of love; He is attentive to the will of God. This is the first flame of His love! Then there are also souls who suffer from offences against God, who cry out, burn, and break out; who are enthusiastic and subjugate; hope and are dejected. They glow for the temple and for the God of the temple; standing as flaming angels wielding their scourge . . . fire and ardour consume them. Let us guard and protect the temple of our heart . . . the Church of the Lord . . . the souls of others! How many hucksters surround them!

We will be brave; the scourge of God is in our hand! How strong is the child which takes its stand on the side of virtue; even hardened sinners feel its superiority.

(*b*) The charity of Jesus is not soft and weak. "Zeal" which is able to be touched but not to make sacrifices and exert its will refers to Him in vain. His love is not only mercy and goodwill but discipline and severity. Do not let us trust in zeal and emotion if we do not derive strength from it for subduing ourselves and for the absolute accomplishment of the divine will. This is how we are to comprehend the word: we progress and develop in so far as we subdue ourselves, that is in so far as we live and experience the divine will, even at the cost of sacrifice and self-denial, if necessary. Sacrifice and self-conquest are not values in themselves, they are only means.

(*c*) One talks of "holy" anger and points to Christ. Passion is natural and surely not a moral deficiency; but it should not carry us away. Our Lord Christ was holy even in His anger; man is usually not holy in his anger; many ignoble elements mix with our passion and excitement.

THE ZEAL OF JESUS

"*Jesus works with a scourge also.*"

(*a*) Jesus found little sympathy for His Gospel and He had to work to make a way for it in the heart of His disciples. He worked for this perseveringly; the root of His ardour was His strong, enthusiastic, devoted will. God shall conquer . . . He has to conquer. "Let the bow of the sinners break." He does not get confused in adversities, "*in tempore malo.*" There are bad times, there are evil ways, "*via mala*"; He sees the enemy of God, "*qui prosperatur in via sua,*" who is lucky and succeeds. No matter; always onward. He cries out, bestirs Himself, and works, and does not murmur at this task of His. . . . Lord, my Lord, here I am, Thy servant and warrior am I; I work and strive; I do not wish to languish.

(*b*) As the trunk of the tree branches into hundreds and hundreds of twigs and shoots into thousands and thousands of leaves and flowers, so the ardent soul also spreads out its arms and longings; it puts forth sprouts and spreads; it is sensitive and also sorrowful; it glows and also cools down; it brightens and darkens. It sees thousands and thousands of souls whom it ought to help and sees much trouble and scandal which it ought to stop. It builds the temple of God and at the same time quarries stones, burns lime, carries sand; it busies itself about the world; it does not look upon anything as not pertaining to it. And this work of the soul is no agony, no labour, but is inspired by love. Such strength and perseverance is only to be found in love. Therefore, we are not to break and tear asunder but to go on working smilingly.

(*c*) Ardour has ailments also; these are anger and annoyance; "Cease from anger, and leave rage; have no emulation to do evil." (*Psalms* xxxvi. 8.) Then there is dejection, which overtakes the Prophets also: Moses, Elijah . . . The Holy Scripture tells us: "Be not emulous of evil-doers, nor envy them that work iniquity." (*Psalms* xxxvi. 1.) These are all boasters; they have no aim. There further exists *one-sidedness*, which fixes on one thing only; which sees only evil and despairs at it, and becomes an elegiacal, piteous soul. There is a remedy for these: do not let us despair but " Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart. Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Jesus is with us; our motives come from the depths of eternity; blood, the blood of Jesus, feeds us and kindles fire in our heart.

JESUS EXHORTS THE DISCIPLES TO BELIEVE

" *Have the faith of God. Amen I say to you; that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be cast into the sea, and shall not stagger in his heart, that whatsoever he saith shall be done.*" (*Mark* xi. 22.)

Our heart wavers; we come under great impressions and shocks; the conquests and achievements of the progressing world affect our heart as a strong, invisible radiance and excite it. In this excitement those who claim there is a new world, a new view of life, new values, new directions, those may have a disturbing impression upon us by saying: Leave the old one, live like modern men do. How are we to remain unaltered in this new world?

(*a*) We cannot sufficiently admire this great, broad, deep, mysterious, wonderful world. It is in this world that man gains ground with his culture; he asserts himself more powerfully, learns to conquer and to reign and shapes higher forms of his life than any in which he formerly lived. In the measure in which the world has widened before our eyes and we became its rulers, in that measure our life also became more valuable ; w discovered new values in it to appreciate and enjoy which is in no way shame, but glorious. Turning to the world, we were able to enrich existence and render it more agreeable and more beautiful and we could recognise the ideas of God in this also. We are not called upon to smash the world, to rob life of its blossoms. Our gifts and talents are the forces of existence, and the forces naturally urge development and action. Was not a new world, a new life, opened up in the fourth, fifth, ninth, eleventh, thirteenth centuries ? Summing up what has been said : In the eyes of the modern man the picture of the world has changed, it has become larger and more imposing ; the cultural way of life has changed, it has become richer and more vigorous ; because of this, life has become more valuable, which it would be foolish to break down and despise ; but the world of faith is intact and concerning this our difficulties, even though they be as mountains, are submerged in the sea, in the infinity, of God.

(*b*) The greater the world of man became and the stronger his life, the purer and deeper became his consciousness that there exists a spiritual world above mechanical forces which projects out of space and time, leaves these out of consideration, and makes its own eternal values shine always and everywhere. The superiority of spirit over matter ; its control of things and events ; its unrestricted power of legislation ; they are felt everywhere, whether it be in the sublimity of moral laws and ideals, or in the deliberate ordering of everything that is ranged alongside something else or has an effect on something else; or whether it be in the consciousness of ethical values that is found in both king and beggar. The greater the knowledge of the world, the greater our control of the things of the world, and the greater our spiritual consciousness and our belief in the superiority and sovereignty of the spirit. *Quid hoc contra æternitatem?* we can say the most appropriately, standing as we do on the highest grade of culture: how inferior is all this compared with eternity! *Ad majora natus sum* . . . no one can say this so well as those who have looked into the workshop of nature with the deepest knowledge! The world's cultural values are, after all, creations of the human spirit; above them we recognise the eternal values of the spiritual world. The more conscious and richer our life is, the more deep and intimate can it become; and hand-in-hand with this goes the disdain of formalities and of mere historical elements. Our soul . . . that is our treasure; its aim is the perfect, holy life; the rich, superior, fuller life, which culminates in the union with God. This soul and the divine life developing in it are the crown of existence; it is not subordinated to anything or anyone; neither to the world, to society, to man, humanity, culture, nor to anything else in the whole world. For every particle of knowledge, as well as progress and culture, serves life and raises men, and if they serve him, then that is the only real, sweet life, and man cannot be its tool, but its master and enjoyer. Life—the life of every individual—is the true meaning of culture; without us it has no sense; so after all we and we again, our seeing, and nobly, purely loving soul, our soul which forcibly asserts itself, is the greatest reality which everything serves; what therefore does not serve this but enslaves it is a murderous, rebel element; in such way there exist murderous science, murderous culture, murderous social life which neglects life, neglects the truth or enslaves them to merely abstract ideals, which torment mankind with fixed delusions and hereditary taints.

Oh, my Lord, let us feel Thy touch. Let us feel the stream of pure, immortal life in our soul! Let our eyes be cleansed from the mist, the fog . . . let our brain be purified as well as our consciousness cleansed and purified from the confusing noise of the world. . . . Come, look into our soul and say to it: Thou divine soul, thou my eternal and immortal child, thou walkest in time and space and many different taints settle in thee along the long line of culture; do not lose thy sense for the superior, valuable dignity of thy nature; do not serve anything; but rule over everything: over time as well as over beauty and power so that thou may be imperishable, fresh, and healthy. Feel the divine temperament in thyself; do not hide thy light under a bushel; recognise the odour of earth and decay in everything which the world offers thee in exchange for thyself. No, no, those are unexchangeable values because they are incomparable and oppose each other thus: the world, science, culture, institutions, and ways of life on one side, and on the other side thou, in whom spiritual consciousness is the source of light and strength, and the pith and centre of science, culture, and ways of life! Thou art the crown of the world which blossoms forth, if with thy science and culture and with the display of thine energy thou servest the all-highest: the divine life. *Deus meus et omnia.*

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

"*There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen: and went into a strange country.*" (*Matt.* xxi. 33.)

(*a*) The householder is God, the vineyard is the kingdom of God, the hedge is the care of God, the winepress is the divine law, the tower is the protection of authority. . . . How much the Lord has done for us! Our soul rejoices when we think of the kingdom of God; there is law in it and authority, there is a stone wall and iron railings; but the stone wall is painted, it is a fair home, and the iron railing is artistic and overgrown with flowers. We love these strong walls which enclose a dear home; this hedge which surrounds garden and flowers; this tower which is high and imposing and gives us shelter. This is not a prison, but our joy and consolation; these are not our fetters, but our safety, and we feel it is good to be here; we run about this house and vineyard as the child about the courtyard of his father's house.

(*b*) "*Planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about.*" He also has a ploughed field in which He sows His seed, but He likes to liken His kingdom to a vineyard, to a vineyard upon rocky mountain-sides in the burning sunlight; there too, the spade and hoe are at work and sweat is abundant and the glow of heaven sparkles; but there is also blossoming there, that sweet scent, "*odor suavitatis*"; there is must which ferments; and wine which fires and stimulates. Jesus loves those souls whose passions are scent but also strength; they ferment; sometimes they are unclear and clouded but they become purified, and there is fire and strength in them. The love of God makes us enthusiastic and exhilarated. The love of Jesus, "*cella vinaria*," "*cella aromatum*," is a pleasant abode, a scented, flowery home . . . it is sweet and strong. This is how the soul is to be and it shall not be disturbed if sometimes its world of feeling and ideas and its whole self ferments; let it work up its feelings and passions into fire and strong love.

(*c*) "*And when the time of the fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof. And the husbandmen laying hands on his servants, beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.*" In this vineyard wine, sweet fiery wine, has to grow: that is passionate, ardent, and strong love and this has to manifest itself from time to time. This is the fruit of God; but the lustful tree, the foliage, the unripe and rotten grape are the fruit of the world. Let us all feel that we are to bring forth the products of God. This is our task: What would be the value of hedge, winepress, and tower, and what that of the Church, if souls would not breathe their scent and would not be aglow in holy love? Oh, do not let us bring shame upon the master-works of God by our bungling!

(*d*) "*And last of all he sent to them his son, saying: They will reverence my son.*" The Gospel becomes tender when it speaks of this son: He had a very dear son. . . . He is dearer than prophets, martyrs, kingly souls, dearer than Saints; those are servants, while this is his very dear son. . . . And he does not look upon that vineyard as upon an ownerless property, but he loves it so that he wastes his son upon it, that very dear son . . . For as his son is very dear to him, so also is his vineyard; "*vinea mea*," "my vineyard." The mother Church and our soul are the very dear vineyard of the Lord, for which He gave His very dear Son. Oh, where is our place? Upon the heart of God, we are very dear to Him; He gives His Son for us! What joy and glory this is, and what duties fall to our lot because of it!

(*e*) "*And taking him they cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.*" Wild boars plunge through the vineyard, the wine does not blossom, it has no sweet fruit, neither has it animating sap, and they kill the very dear son. Ruin and deep unhappiness reign there. This is what the Jews did long ago; this is what everyone does who despises Christ; such a one's soul is not flowery, there is no ardent fire glowing in it, no enthusiasm of eternal life. It is impossible to compare other blossoms and saps with the wine of divine love; those who do not drink it, those do not know the deepest joy of life. "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure." (*Psalms* xxxv. 9.) "Oh, that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! Thy peace had been as a river, and thy justice as the waves of the sea." (*Isaiah* xlviii. 18.) And without this "He will come and miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." No, oh no, my Lord, I will be true and faithful!

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

"*A certain man had two sons, and coming to the first, he said: Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. And he answering,* *said : I will not. But afterwards being moved with repentance he went. And coming to the other, he said in like manner. And he answering, said : I go, Sir, and went not."* (*Matt.* xxi. 28.)

(*a*) This is an example of the contradictions of the human soul. The public sinners despised the grace of God but they were converted by the preachings of John the Baptist and Jesus, and they came to God in the tracks of Magdalene and the prodigal ; they became humble and holy ; and those who always carried the word of God in their mouths denied it with the deeds of Pharisees and priests. There are many believers who believe because of tradition and custom, but who do not live ; priests who preach the Gospel because it is their life profession, but do not live it ; emotional souls, who are enthusiastic and who weep, who are ready also to make a vow, but who do not live seriously and consistently. How tragic is the fickle will that wills whereas it has no real will. It is a great grace to will strongly and with joy ; to enjoy the noble, beautiful world of goodwill. It is God who gives us this in the shape of strength and germ, but it is we who have to work it out !

(*b*) " *Which of the two did the father's will? They say to him : The first.*" Yes ; in the final issue the first ; but not in the beginning. At the start he was rough, unfeeling, and reckless. How rough and thorny his soul is when the father approaches him with love and his answer is a rude " I will not." How much defiance, coarseness, hardness there is in this young, inexperienced, head-strong will, in this young colt, which only opposes and kicks, and believes that this is what makes strength and happiness. How much roughness and unevenness there is in this otherwise good, but raw and discourteous wilfulness. It is our parents, superiors, intimates, and, above all, God, who feel this! Do not let our soul be a bush of thorns, neither let it be as hard as a nut which can only be enjoyed after being broken.

(*c*) "*Amen I say to you, that the publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you.*" When there exists an opposing will let us unite it as early as possible with insight, humility, repentance, penitence, so that it should become good will; but do not let us remain a bush of thorns on the barren rocky mount of opposition. What a poor life this is and what a misled one! Publicans and harlots shame us! If we have not been such, let us take care not to be conceited, formal, Christians belonging to a guild, with the semblance of the Gospel, but without internal contentment. Oh Lord, break us, bruise us, melt us, ripen us, purify us, re-create us!

PARABLE OF THE KING'S MARRIAGE. I

"*The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants, to call them that were invited . . . and they would not come.*" (*Matt.* xxii. 2.)

(*a*) Here Jesus calls our relation to God and our inner world arranged according to His ideas the kingdom of heaven. Our frame of mind, the way we think, feel, and love, the deepest mood and longing . . . that is our heaven. This is what Jesus likens to a wedding. God comes towards us with love and happiness, He comes as a betrothed and calls, He calls us that we also should come to His wedding. The wedding is a feast-day, an unparalleled feast; it is greater than Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide; it is our feast; our soul revives and blossoms forth in the sunshine; it does not feel the load of life because it is ardent and strong. It leaves far behind it care, fear, and the shadow of evil; it does not walk upon sawdust and stubble but upon flowery lawns. It celebrates a feast which is not a week-day, but the day of sublime, exalted ideas. . . . This is how our inner world is to be. The wedding is strong, sweet joy, and reassurance in the one we love. We possess a great treasure, we have found a loving soul and are united with it; we are not orphans, nor strangers; we have a home! This feast is created in the soul by strong faith, by rising out of the world, out of death; it wakes us to sunshine which has no sunset, awakes us to a dewy, fresh, spring day. It elevates us, makes kings of us, and from the heights we look upon the world, town, village, field, and meadow; we soar aloft like the eagle! This is a feast indeed! It likewise gives joy, "*gaudium magnum*," because it gives treasure: eternal hope, God, strength, beauty; "Rejoicing in hope." (*Romans* xii. 12.) "The God of hope fill you with all joy." (*Romans* xv. 13.) We rejoice, for we possess whom we love. We will not despair; we will be soaring souls which sing hymns and psalms. What we need is feasting and joy; when there is none of this, then God is not in us!

(*b*) We taste and enjoy the rejoicing soul of Jesus, who is able to rejoice profoundly and to educate us to it also. Others said we have to do this and that, we have to pray seven times and wash so and so many times, but what He wishes are souls, bridal souls who stand by God out of free decision and love. He wishes for self-respecting souls which sing and which from out of the love of treasure and precious pearls " go with joy and sell everything," which act from joy and not groaningly. To live without God and far from God is difficult, but we are able to live it as a child on the knees of God with joy in our hearts, to live it purely and bravely. This is the feeling we have to cultivate in ourselves !

(*c*) " *But they neglected, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.*" They neglect this beautiful, sweet inner world and only care for the earthly ; such slowly become tired, empty men, without content and value ; they are servants of the world, not its masters ; they do not do honour to the source out of which science, art, and culture breaks forth in the world, do not do honour to the uttermost depths of the soul ; they throw worldly rubbish into them, whereas those depths cannot be filled up, and it is from them that light, beauty, and joy stream forth. They either go after merchandise and become machines, or in the mechanism of labour lose the immediate contact with God ; the machine is their God ; it is the machine which breaks and bruises not only earth, iron, and wood but also heart and man ; it is the machine which threshes out bread ; and man adores his idols ! It is man who made it and now he even lays his soul in its iron grip and arms ; they are not fatherly arms, not even human ones ! They bring servility and unbearable soullessness !

PARABLE OF THE KING'S MARRIAGE. II

" *And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good. . . . And the king went in to see the guests : and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith to him : Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent.*" (*Matt.* xxii. 10.)

(*a*) In the wedding-house there are good men and bad men ; there are such who have no wedding garments, no festive rejoicing soul which is strong in God. A woeful sight! As the withered tree in the May forest, and the blotch made by the extinguished fire of the shepherd on a dewy meadow, so are they, and the king wonderingly asks : How camest thou in here without a bridal disposition? What sort of a Christian art thou if thou hast not been reborn ; what sort of a believer, without having learned to rejoice and be strong ; what sort of a Catholic, if thou didst not awake to the consciousness of the advantages of thy eternal bliss? We are of no account without a festive, rejoicing, disposition which enjoys its graces, clings to God, lives in His sweet-strong presence and views the soul as a treasure and precious pearl!

(*b*) " *Then the king said to the waiters : Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" The great festivities being held at night in the East, the guest who was cast out from the bright room came into darkness. Without a wedding disposition man is dark and goes towards eternal darkness. We will not believe in darkness, sorrow, and hopelessness. If our world-weary philosophers weary us, we go over hill and dale, and the wild-rose, the poppy, and the cornflower cry to us: "They are wrong." Then we go into the nearest Church, where in the Eucharist, in the benediction of the Church, in holy water, candles, ashes, altar, and sacred vessels we recognise the hem of Christ's garment: Jesus is with us—is what we cry—we do not walk in darkness. We live in His house and enjoy His light and love. But how many are there in the outer darkness, outside His Church, and how many in inner darkness even within His Church!

(*c*) We have a horror of both kinds of darkness, for they stifle light and joy. We value highly our membership of the Church, for here light and warmth stream into us from every direction. Those who are outside do not comprehend this, but those who sit at the king's table in wedding garments and enjoy the Lord and receive His direct impressions in His Sacraments, those know what the "outer darkness" is, those know what it is to be "outside the house" and comprehend the hard words of the Saints who warn us against the flood which is outside the ark, and against the darkness which is outside the house. Oh, my Lord and King, it is good for us to be here! Thanks be to Thee!

PARABLE OF THE KING'S MARRIAGE. III

"*The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son.*" (*Matt.* xxii. 2.)

(*a*) In Holy Communion two men meet: the kingly one who wants to impart wedding joy to us and the man called in from the street, who is in great need of this exceptional grace but has no lawful claim to it. Jesus, who is strength and life, comes towards us in this way: He is whole, strong, fresh as the dewy pine-forest; He is no more tired than the mountain river; He is full of strength like the kingly eagle and He descends and it is this soul He wishes to impart to us, to us the dwellers of the marshy plains. We know that this is why He comes, we feel the hem of His robe, our soul feels the spirit of strength and vitality. How good this is; we expand our lungs and fill our soul with His breath.

(*b*) "*What is the food at this wedding?*" He himself; not some kind of doctrine; that others also give; but His stream of life which streams forth from Him into us. It can be expressed by sentences such as the Gospel consists of but those are also merely words about life, disposition, feeling, and spirit; this soul itself and this life are the wedding-food. This is what we are filled with when we communicate. There is a more beautiful, stronger life in us. Consequently it is not word and sentence that are the food we partake of in the Holy Eucharist but blood, warm enthusiasm, and joy. This fiery blood burns out our impurity; this is what renders us ardent and active. This enthusiasm makes us rejoice, this joy renders us brave against strife and temptation. This is the bread of the soul, and it is sweet bread, "*panis pinguis*."

(*c*) Many, many men come to the Holy Banquet with different kinds of doubt, trouble, sorrow, bitterness, and longing and all seek for strength and consolation. Let them plunge their soul into Christ: into the king, judge, sufferer, and good shepherd, into the pilgrim and Samaritan. Let them partake of His soul; they will surely find recovery and strength. Let no one think that Christ despises him. It is not for this reason that He called them to the wedding. And if He respects and loves us, then He is sure to help. Just because He is so great, He extends His attention also to the humblest one.

IS IT LAWFUL TO GIVE TRIBUTE TO CÆRSAR?

"*Then the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves to ensnare him in his speech. And they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians.*" (*Matt.* xxii. 15.)

(*a*) How many distorted figures swarm around Jesus; what opinions, judgments and antipathies! This happens because the individual receives the impression and it is he who shapes it in himself after his own image. In this way the adorable Jesus can be despised, and the beautiful Jesus become distorted. He, the vital one, can become a weak, ailing figure in the eyes of such. How much the soul is able to do and undo! O my Jesus, we look upon Thee in the midst of such evil-minded men with feeling full of pain. We are also mirrors, sometimes convex and sometimes concave; we also distort Thy great ideas and paralyse Thy grace. How intensely have we to discipline our individual feelings and impressions! How severely have we to purify, shape, and reform them!

(*b*) "*Saying: Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us therefore what dost thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?*" (*Matt.* xxii. 16.) Every word is a noose, every question a snare . . . mask and deception. The word is untrue, the intention evil, man wears a mask. The mouth is sweet, but poisonous the heart.

The word is flowery but conceals a sting. "Master!" Oh, yes, master indeed, Thou knowest how little they hold Thee, Master. "We know that thou art true." Oh yes, Thou knowest that they hold Thee for a false prophet and demagogue, but they flatter. How the world surrounds the soul with traps, illusions, fears, lies, tempting words, enervating slackness, and bad will, and it wishes to capture it. And how easily the world captures us, how easily we stumble and fall! We are not sufficiently afraid of it! Youth, especially, believes and is deceived. Its instructor is frivolous society; it is there that it hears the words and sentences of misery. Let us despise and avoid it as the smooth, shining, but loathsome snake.

(*c*) "*. . . and teachest the way of God in truth.*" Thou dost not give theories but showest reality and dost lead us up to it. There are many theories and sufficient programmes; but what we need is "the way of God," the real, virtuous way of life. What force this is as opposed to the flowery, specious, forceless wisdom of the world. We have to take the Gospel seriously and transplant it prudently into our life, with faith, self-abnegation, discipline, and patience.

(*d*) "*But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said: Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him, Cæsar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's: and to God, the things that are God's.*" Jesus did not come to smooth out our economic or political troubles. Jesus does not answer the question whether the Jewish people shall endeavour to make themselves independent of Rome: He announces higher laws. Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; I do not prescribe economic and political development in my Gospel but I lift the struggling soul above the ocean of surging life; I educate it to spiritual independence, to liberty, and faithfulness to God. Worldly progress goes its own way; but whether we live in the classical age, the middle age, the Renaissance, or the modern age, let us be the children of God; let us carry His image upon our soul. We cannot easily change the world, but we can walk in it as the children of God!

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

"*And one of them a doctor of law asked him, tempting him: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*" (*Matt.* xxii. 35.)

(*a*) Love thy Lord. What we love and are able to love comes from Him and out of Him; our heart also, with instinct of love and the demand for the return of love, and its capability of rendering happiness, comes from God. Let us love Him, in Him we find everything; therefore we can only love Him truly for Himself. "My God and my all"—is what St. Francis of Assisi kept on saying. "God is love" said St. John the Evangelist. His happiness is infinite, active love; His commandments are from love; when He punishes and puts us on trial, then also He loves us. His commandment is very simple: Love with all thy heart and with all thy soul, warmly, with ardour and feeling; love me and every man for me. Love with all thy strength; not only with words, not only sentimentally, but with deeds. Let us do as much as we are able from the motives of love. Let us say: Lord, I love Thee, therefore I do this or suffer that, that is why I act in this or that way. Not from human consideration, selfishness, or for profit and glory; but for Thee, looking at Thee from the start, and casting the glance of both my eyes upon Thee.

(*b*) "*And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" The world would be happy if we would know and experience this law; but we are very far from it. The world is filled with cruelty. Will this ever be different? We will not philosophize but will kindle the flame of love in our circle, and let everyone do this as far as he is able. "If every Russian would plant a tree in his life-time, Russia would become a garden and if every man would render only one man happy the world would become paradise." (*Dostoievski.*) This is an idea like the Gospel. Few men share it; the rest go on hating. But those who comprehend it, those know that this is the way to improve the world. Let us love every man without considering country, race, religion; let us love them: (1) Let us behave with goodwill towards them; (2) along the whole line of civil life; (3) if we are ministers, doctors, judges, teachers, clerks, let us fulfil our task and vocation; (4) let us love the individual, society, and our home and country.

(*c*) "*On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.*" These two commandments include everything else. Therefore those who love carry the book of laws within themselves and feel what they have to do. No one has need of much science or great libraries to be a good man. But this is our vocation and earthly aim. Therefore we love, and through this we become good men and the more patiently and selflessly we love, the better men will we become and be more like the Lord, who loved and suffered us ungrateful sinners.

(*d*) We have to love well. Our fellow-brothers have body and soul; we have firstly regard for their soul; let us educate their way of thinking, and their sentiments; let us lead them to the truth, make them love virtue, console and visit them, and perform the works of corporal mercy also. We will not condemn anyone until we are convinced; but we will treat everyone as evil who is more or less inclined towards evil; let us treat everyone prudently, carefully, and with consideration. We are not to be mean with our goodwill and not to be mistrustful and think whether this or that person deserves our love and is not deceiving us. For it is for God that we love man! Who reasons much, loves little. We have to be prudent and instead of alms rather give opportunity for work; let us try and win the trust of men; let us help them to enjoy life and avert their obstacles and difficulties.

CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES. I

"*Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law . . . mercy and faith.*" (*Matt.* xxiii. 23.)

(*a*) Brothers, value the pure, unpretentious, noble, Christian life which is lived and experienced for the sake of God. We do not live for ourselves if we are in discord with our conscience and evade ourselves, if we dare not look ourselves in the eye and only hear reproaches in our inner self; such as: Thou soul which is like to the Pharisee, thou outwardly seemest to be something and demandeth reverence, thou feignest honour, but inwardly thou art base! Ye whitened sepulchres . . . said Christ; decay and loathsomeness are in you; ye well feel this, for your inner self is dirty and mean and you wish to prove yourselves outwardly effectual. Ye sin against the reverence of inner value and ye outwardly seek the esteem of man. Your life has no soul, no ardour, no value. Do not seek the value of life in outer works, occupations, representations. The value of life is the experienced beauty and warmth of motive. Jesus said of the widow that her two farthings contained greater value than the gold of the Pharisees. The gifts of these is gold, whereas it is her heart which is gold, strength, and beauty. The Pharisees did not experience the moral worth of giving; she did. They gave coldly, she gave warmly, ardently. The Apostle says that love is everything and that without it all is valueless. If we possessed knowledge but had no love and would not be sensible of it, then our head would be filled with empty science. Our poor head would be the sepulchre of cold ideas. If we had actions, but no love, that is no inner life, then we would drag out an impoverished existence.

(*b*) "*Woe to you . . . because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish: but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness.*" If we would create a lovely world and create culture by our endeavour, if we would lavish ourselves in words and enterprises and move crowds, but not live for ourselves, for the love of our soul, then we have missed the purpose of existence. My God, it is for ourselves that we have to live; we have to live in the consciousness of the goodness, nobility, and purity of our deeds; that consciousness has to be filled with light, with noble, warm motives, with selfless intentions! It is only then that we really live. Without this we are automata, prisoners encased in the strait-jacket of the outer world. In a word, let us live for the purpose of becoming better every day.

(*c*) "*But woe to you . . . because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter.*" Ye go not in but avoid it. *Per avia et devia* . . . ye go on trackless ways and in blind-alleys and lead others thither. Ye desire only laws, commands, traditions, and customs . . . and persuade men to accomplish these but confine yourselves to the mechanical accomplishment of these things and give no time to delve into them, experience, and enjoy them. In this way your laws and religion become formality and the great heap of rubbish bars your way. Ye make a Jew out of the proselyte but do not render him ardent; ye boast about the crowds, the numbers, but ye do not educate more souls! You urge outward unity and power but do not tend consciousness, will, ardour, and feeling. I say even more; you are busy yourselves, you play the proselyte, but you have no time to enjoy your own sweet inner intimacy. It is not sufficient that we be baptised; we also have to experience the Christ-like life. What use is it if we only baptise, but do not educate the inner man? It is truly said of us: we neither go to heaven ourselves nor lead others there. Therefore to live and enjoy the smallest deed in conscious morality is the great secret of inner life. To rejoice that we are pure and that God is in us; to work with a whole heart upon our moral purification, if we are sinful; to do good with enjoyed, rejoicing goodwill. To rejoice in faith, in goodwill, and in the victory over temptation. To rejoice that Jesus is here in the Sacrament of the Altar, to go to Him as through the open gates of Paradise. We rejoice when we say: Jesus, I love Thee from my heart. We approach the sick, the children, with conscious goodwill. With such conduct we may change the face of the world!

CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES. II

"*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish; but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness.*" (*Matt.* xxiii. 25.)

(*a*) Our first feeling we should have is that we are burdened with innumerable faults. We strive towards God but our absent-mindedness clearly shows that we falter at the start, we give but little expression of our love for God in actions and sacrifice. Sensuality lustfully grows in our soul, and as the weed overgrows the corn-crop so sensuality overgrows and weighs down the soul. Let us bear in mind how we dislike to be ignored, what an unknown feeling patience is to us, and what vain souls we are who do not deny ourselves. We wish others to cherish us, and we enter the school of virtue and humility merely for the sake of recognition and reward. Let us view how loth we are to do penance, but how diligent we are concerning eating, drinking, and sleeping, and how we treat our body like a petted doll, and if our food is too salted or too sweet, too dry, too soft, burnt, or overdone, then to what elegies do we tune the strings of our soul! How repulsive we sometimes are in our talk, how rash in our answers, how slow in obeying, how reluctant to be lenient to others, how aimless in our occupations, selfish in our reasoning, superficial in the accomplishment of our duties, distracted in our prayers; we do not like to keep silent and we are unable to speak aright, we are worldly in our behaviour, undisciplined in our thoughts, we are affected and beggarly in our inner life. How often laziness conquers us and how seldom we enter the lists against it. How often we complain about our superiors! How often we neglect the good out of human consideration! How much chaff and tow, rubbish, culm, and shavings . . . for kindling the fire of purgatory! From the depths of our soul we look into the stars as from out of the labyrinth of an immense infirmary.

(*b*) But we not only have faults but also sins; we should speak not only of a hospital but of a morgue. Would that the scent of death were not upon us; but the past probably shows innumerable dark memories, each of which has deserved hell. Not only our actual faults but the remembrance of our great sins should also urge us on. Fiery, strict virtue grows upon the slopes of hell just as fiery wine grows upon the slopes of Vesuvius. For those who ought already to stand amidst flames are able to endure cold and heat; those who ought to live "*in igne devorante*" can be satisfied with scanty food and unheated rooms; those who ought to be wearing fetters can endure the whims of others, and he who was the enemy of God, is not astonished if everything does not fall out according to his pleasure. This realistic faith renders us humble, disciplined, and self-denying. Let us often look into hell; an idealism that ignores the danger, can end in hell. Let us hope that we will not get there, but we may not disregard the possibility of this immense misfortune. Do not let us be scandalised at this; the martyrs also thought of hell. They thought of eternal glory, of the love of Christ, of the sublimity of the purity of conscience, of the grace of God; but they also thought of hell. Do not let us believe that it is meant only for great sinners. Yawning rock precipices are found even on the edge of blooming forest slopes. Even if we enact miracles, even then let us beware! Christ has warned us.

(*c*) The third element of our realism is the Holy Cross, the Passion of Christ. How this shines into soft, mean souls! God loves His son but turns His path towards the cross. We cannot arrange our life in such a way that the architrave of our house is not the cross. Do not let us fear it; no house is strong from which this transom is missing. It is a beam; it is hard and rough, but it is a master-beam; it teaches much and specially it educates us to a noble, strong, developed life. Let us love self-abnegation, but not for the sake of a command that comes from without, but for the sake of the beauty which gushes forth from it and overflows our soul. "Fear God and depart from evil: for it shall be health to thy navel, and moistening to thy bones." (*Proverbs* iii. 7, 8.)

CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES. III

"*Therefore behold I send to you prophets, and wise men and scribes: and some of them you will put to death and crucify . . . that upon you may come all the just blood . . .*" (*Matt.* xxiii. 34.)

(*a*) I send unto you men who shall raise you, who shall stir up the spirit amongst you ; they are my pioneers, my reflections. Each endeavoured to bring men nearer to God, but his contemporaries killed him, and ye now honour him. What a great woe it is not to understand the present age and the great interests upon which we ought to work. Instead of this we are hair-splitters ; we praise the past and misunderstand the present. This is a faulty and dangerous proceeding. Let us have a sense for the good that is present and not hinder progress by opposing it to the past. Here we are, here we work, this is our hour. We know that those always live in great times who see the developments of the great designs of God in their time and serve them accordingly.

(*b*) Jesus is deeply moved ; He is living His last days and He looks along the whole line of the merciful designs of God. " Evil " stands on the heights of the mutiny against God. How many have worked against the Lord ! Jesus always worked for God and souls. His heart's desire sounds like complaint and warning : I have done everything for souls, for my people. My native country, my nation, how I loved thee ! As the hen gathers her chickens beneath her wing, so have I cherished thy sons. Much of our work is futile ; but we go forward, we persevere ! We look on God, it is Him we serve ; we can do without success.

(*c*) "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children . . . and thou wouldest not.*" Ye would not ; your sons have left you, they willed it so ; their country was destroyed, they willed it ; their temple became a ruin, they willed it. Bad will is the nemesis of man. Over the ruins of bliss and the abyss of hell the painful words are heard: ye would not. Whereas God wills, He wills with that sweet will out of the depths of which comes maternal love and even the motherly instinct of the hen! Let us believe that we have only to will! Bad will is also the undecided, slack, uncaring, dejected will; good-will is the strong, eager, decided will; this is what is wanted.

THE END OF THE WORLD

"*And as he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples saith to him: Master, behold what manner of stones, and what building are here. And Jesus answering, said: . . . There shall not be left one stone upon another . . .*" (*Mark* xiii. 1.)

(*a*) A victorious feeling, the feeling of strength and power seizes man when he looks upon his works and admires the master-works of culture; and then he sighs: "O vanity of vanities!" How many cultures have come and gone since Tyre and Rome; the "stones of Venice are washed by the flood of transitoriness, and nations also age: Cernimus exemplis oppida posse mori!" Only the soul is immortal, and its unfading beauty smiles at us above the wrinkled face of Tyre, Jerusalem, Rome, and Venice! This is the real joy and glory!

(*b*) "*And as he sat on the mount of Olivet over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him apart: Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall begin to be fulfilled?*" These are the interested "seers," these are the prophetic souls, who viewed the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor and will view His being overshadowed in the Garden of Gethsemani. Here they look into the far future and would like to see the transfiguration of misery and decay: anti-Christ, world-conflagration, world-restoration, the heavenly Jerusalem are their crises. We need not examine the details of these events; we see that the divine designs for the world surpass our imagination; the world and its life are divinely ordered, and we adore the Lord with humility, even if we have no idea of the beginning and end of creation. One thing we know well: the last day will come, the day of the Lord, on which day He will permit us to look into His plans and into the sublime execution of them. The day of His justification will come, when it will be clear that He is right, and why everything had to be thus and not otherwise. We also will be "seers"; and until then let us be "believers," rejoicing believers, in the great world-evolution and the final victory of God.

(*c*) "*For . . . there will rise up false Christs . . . the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall be falling down. . . . And then shall they see the son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory.*" We know that the cosmic catastrophes of the end of the world are only poetical colour and rustic tales. As Moses rustically wrote down the history of creation so does the apocalyptic writer describe the end of the world and, what is more, adds passion to it and bright phantasy, a vehement soul, and figurative language. We must only strive not to desert the real, primeval Christ, that our sun shall not be darkened, and our stars shall not fall! In the cosmic sense we will not believe these descriptions of the world's end to be true, for they refer to the popular belief that the world was the centre of the universe and that the sun, moon, and stars were small and moving bodies. The idea that from the collision of these immense astral bodies the earth would change into a glowing mass of gas is quite unknown to the apocalyptic; but we all the more urge the taking to heart of the danger of the end of the soul, of that of life and joy. Jesus did not wish to tell the time and manner in which the world would end, He used the language of the apocalypse, but He pointed to the end of the soul: If ye die in sin, ye will be damned. It is sufficient for us to know this, so that we can survive in any catastrophe with the faith of our pure soul! Faith and moral purity! "Take ye heed, watch, and pray, for ye know not when the time is . . . lest coming on a sudden he find you sleeping." (*Mark* xiii. 33.)

THE LAST DAY

"*When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation . . . then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains . . . immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened. and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall . . . and then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn.*" (*Matt.* xxiv. 15.)

(*a*) The glorious arrival of the humble son of man; He who departed from us on the Mount of Olives on the first Ascension Day descends again to us, He whom we awaited and longed for; this is His glorious advent. Angels carry His banner, the glorious cross, and the clouds burning in all the colours of sunset's fiery pomp are His chariot of victory; angels' trumpets blaze abroad the regenerating, resurrecting will of God along the clarified world, and sound the new "let it be done," in accordance with which souls again take upon themselves the body befitting them. From the depth of these souls hymn and complaint arises according as they are filled with ecstatic joy or blood-curdling dread. On our knees we view this triumphal procession of our King and Judge: how lovely, how powerful art Thou, Thou "*rex et tremendæ majestatis!*" How sweet Thou hast been in Bethlehem; how quiet and unpretentious in the Sacrament of the Altar; Thou melteth upon my tongue, and filleth me with sweetness, Thou God who art near. With our utmost faith we wish to deserve that Thou shouldst be our gracious judge. It depends on us.

(*b*) "*Then shall the king say to them . . . on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" (*Matt.* xxv. 34.) Jesus looks upon the shining group of Christ-like souls. In white robes with palm-branches in their hands they sing the *Benedictus, qui venit* . . . He looks lovingly upon them: "Ye are my wreath, my crown. My brothers are you, divine blood! Come, ye blessed of my Father; great blessing, the blessing of the creating, redeeming, consecrating God, is fulfilled upon you. It is ye who have lived life to end it in glory, lived the passing time to finish it in eternal youth, lived through sufferings so that they became joy! Possess the kingdom which ye have prayed for, and lived and struggled for, 'Thy kingdom come'; the power, beauty, and grace of God has become shaped into heaven in you." With what victorious joy Jesus says this, and with what a passionate love He pours out His soul upon His followers in this final blessing. The Gospel mentions three blessings: (1) He blessed the children as the representatives of all those who are humble of heart; (2) He blessed His disciples on the Mount of Olives at His ascension, and by so doing gave the pledge of His love and inseparable union with them to mitigate the bitterness of farewell; (3) He blesses His victorious followers. These are the blessings for the beginning, the strife, and the final happy end of human life. Let us strive to merit all the three blessings for ourselves.

(*c*) "*Then shall he say to them . . . on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire . . .*" Two traits characterise the frame of mind of evil ones: terror and cursing. Christ said of them that here upon earth they have no peace; restlessness characterises their psychology; they are not sure in their unbelief. They say that "*primos Deos timor fecit,*" fear made gods, but this "*timor*" is their continual attendant; this it is that gleams forth also in that fanaticism with which they persecute the faith. Those who are not afraid are not continually troubled about the dreaded enemy. This uncertainty will become terror at the final Judgment; "We have missed life, direction, and aim"—they will say—"and have lost everything. We behaved with supercilious enmity towards the great questions of life; we denied God and did not take His sublimity seriously. Behold our judgment." Depart from me, ye, whose hidden curse was just that ye were far away from me; now this curse befalls you in the shape of being thrust away, and that of final separation and damnation. Oh, let us take life seriously as well as its aim, take it seriously in faith, love, and work.

THE LAST JUDGMENT

(*a*) The Last Judgment is a serious, sublime Day; it is the feast of God's justice, holiness, and greatness. It brings to our consciousness the seriousness of existence, of life, and of death; world-history and the differences of race, language, and culture fall off from the spiritual world like dry husks; worldly position, rights, and social status will be like the robes we are divested from, and the soul will stand naked before God and the world; neither speech nor speciousness will be able to conceal its real shape. How beautiful, noble, and shining is the one, how miserable and pitiful the other. We shall see what natural advantage or disadvantage the soul possessed and how the help of grace affected it. The peculiarity of the individual will be remarked as well as the influence of circumstances and social rank; the factors out of which our moral shape was crystallised will be taken into consideration. This will all be visible; there will be no law-suits, no speeches of prosecution and defence; all will be disclosed before God and the world. Our vanity, selfishness, pride, meanness, and falseness will be transparent, and we will cry out: God, Thou art right; Thou wanted good! We also want the good, good from our heart, truly, nobly, straightforwardly; good which is valuable in the eyes of God.

(*b*) At the Last Judgment it will be evident what God did for man and how much grace He gave to individuals from baptism to their dying breath; how many seeds He let fall upon His ground; how many labourers He sent into His vineyard; how carefully He reared and guarded them; what good examples He set before them. Oh, how many seeds of the great Sower have fallen on thorny ground and how late and miserably they sprung forth! Oh, grace, grace, upon what cruel ways dost thou proceed, thy fate is the rocky waste of life and thou bringeth forth only the lazy and indifferent reactions of the human soul! It will be seen what a dreary execution the forceful plans of God found in many, but what a happy one in the followers of Christ! Oh, do not let us spoil the works of God! We will not complain about there being much evil but we will do all the good we can.

(*c*) At the Last Judgment it will also be evident how much the good is that we have actually done with goodwill for God and how much of chaff and dust there is on the barn-floor of life. Human psychology is a misty, false, uncertain world full of instinct, semblance, and illusion; these can only be broken by serious self-examination and watching as well as disciplined self-education. Only such beings can be at all clear about themselves; only such ones verily and unveiledly see their own face. Let us examine ourselves to see how much there is in us of the instinctive, unconscious, false element in our sentiments; let us keep in eye how they colour, disturb, and bring into commotion the depths of consciousness which are being purified. Let us discipline and continually educate ourselves.

(*d*) At the Last Judgment Christ will not only lay open the secrets of our heart and soul, but He will point to the great social task, to the taking up of those who thirst and hunger, who are naked, sick, and sinful, whose agonised soul pointed to the natural ways of accomplishing Christian duty. Let us awaken to the knowledge of the holy, serious will of God. Christ has identified Himself with them and nature demands—*natura exigit, imperat Deus*—especially since the "*natura*" is united with God in Jesus. Those who have felt and experienced this, hunger with the hungry, suffer with the suffering, and look upon their relief as the sweet accomplishment of the will of God!

CONDITIONS OF PEACE

"*In your patience you shall possess your souls.*" (*Luke* xxi. 19.)

(*a*) Patience is what we need for our inner world. We move amongst oppositions and carry them about with us; these oppositions are the spiritual and material world, metaphysics and physics. We are the points of contact between time and eternity, finiteness and the infinite. These can only be harmonised in humble faith; those who do not do this are filled with the one and deny the other. They fall into temptation, for the devil points to the lovely earth and promises everything, promises glittering gold, power, enjoyment; he carves idols, humanism and philanthropy filled with the forgetfulness of God. "Speak, my Lord, Thy servant listeneth" and is reassured by Thy words. We suffer the great world and its secrets for the sake of Thy words; we possess our soul in patience.

(*b*) In many ways souls are at variance with themselves: our passions, evil inclinations, and especially our sins, distress us ; we walk in the waste of illusions amidst the burning ruins of our virtues. Those who live in ugly surroundings, ruined towns, burnt houses, those who always see only evil, who do not believe in the moral order of the world, have a ravaged soul and are in need of the patience of discipline, self-denial, and penitence, which finally gives them peace, and by their goodwill and attachment to God they rise out of the evil surrounding them and are reassured in God.

(*c*) It is with the patience of virtuous life that we become masters of the situation and holy joy fills us. It is when we feel the grace and nearness of God that joy fills us. This is what man is often in want of. Let man live in God as in a rocky fortress, let him consciously every day do as much good as he is able, let him always trust in God and he will conquer the restlessness of life. Let him curb his nature ; he is not to seek outward, sensual pleasures ; he has to occupy himself and not to fret about his health and fate, then his soul will not be seized by melancholy and listlessness. *In patientia et Deo !*

"SEE THE FIG-TREE"

" *And he spoke to them a similitude. See the fig-tree, and all the trees : When they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand.*" (*Luke* xxi. 29.)

(*a*) The tree awakes from its winter sleep in spite of spring winds, stormy nights, and frosts of May ; ye also in spite of the many vicissitudes of the world, ye are to believe that the ideas of God and the holy will of God assert themselves in you, and this faith and hope shall not forsake you. Your soul is also to be such a flowering, awakening tree; its hope is its vernal, awakening strength; hope is the energy of the soul. It is winter when we look at ourselves, but the sunshine from above, that "*inspirata caritas, spes, fortitudo,*" that God gives, encourages us. Winds whistle around us: these are temptations; frosts sadden us: these are our failures; but "*spes mea ab uberibus matris meæ,*" with our mother's milk we have sucked in the hope in our helping, fortifying, bliss-giving God!

(*b*) We are in need of hope: (1) so as to live, for this is the pulse of our life; (2) so as to be strong, to be "*præcinctus,*" prepared; as was the Angel Raphael who appeared to Tobias as a lovely youth ready for adventure. With youthful strength, with clear, pure eyes, he looked into the future. This is the frame of mind which radiates fresh, strong life. And this is what others also feel, for just as our body casts a shadow so our soul also exerts an influence; (3) hope is need, so that we should have a refuge, "*altissimum refugium.*" We soar above troubles, doubt and persecution. "He that dwelleth in the aid of the most High shall abide under the protection of the God of Heaven. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector and my refuge." (*Psalms* xc. 1.) We look down upon the bustling world from the heights.

(*c*) Hope works on a grand scale; it lives for great plans and decisions. How much force there is in this word, because there is trust: we can bear anything in Him who fortifies us. Nothing glorifies divine Almightiness so much as that He renders those almighty who trust in Him. This hopeful disposition shall emanate from us, so that we shall be able to awaken and inspire others. "Trust in him . . . pour out your hearts before him; God is our helper for ever." (*Psalms* lxi. 9.) This is very good indeed for us: "Blessed are all they that trust in him." (*Psalms* ii. 13.) Never let us be of little faith, for "No one came to shame who put his trust in the Lord." Even if it is the case of a hardened sinner: "Him that cometh to me I will not cast out." (*John* vi. 37.) In death also the Lord is our trust: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (*Job.* xiii. 15.) "I have put trust in the Lord; and I shall not be weakened." (*Psalms* xxv. 1.)

THE FIVE WISE AND THE FIVE FOOLISH VIRGINS

"*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish and five wise.*" (*Matt.* xxv. 1.)

(*a*) The ten virgins represent blossoming, beautiful life. How much hope and good cheer there is in these bridesmaids; bridal is the disposition of those who keep the feasts of life. The life of man should be like the spring, chiefly that of youth, in its possession of brightness and light, strength and joy. Then striving humanity also has to be like spring lest it renounce hope of the more beautiful, better, and nobler life; so that it should always await the continuation and wish to develop here below and want "the crown of life" there beyond. For our own person let us also urge the continuation; "to be continued," this is what is written upon every spiritual phase of ours and upon our every endeavour.

(*b*) "*And the bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered.*" They slept, and rested, but their lamps burnt; but there were those whose lamps did not burn. We stand in life as in night, it is necessary that over our whole life the light of Christ should be poured out. In the night of Lord-awaiting our lamp is the lamp of faith; it is this which burns and directs us. In what "inner darkness" do those live to whom this lamp does not give light, and what "outer" darkness will be added to this one, this inner one, when God will turn away from us. Let us swing our lamp, our soul will become sunny from it. Science also has a lamp, but its light does not reach far; it does not light up the depths of the soul. What an infirm generation would such a one be which is born in this darkness and whose cradle Darwinism, materialism, and other such smoking wicks disfigure.

(*c*) "*And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.*" What a sublime, gracious, divine deed is His coming. He justly expects souls to keep night-watch—bridesmaids, wedding guests, who hurry towards Him with burning lamps. And He arrives with love, with sweet, sublime zeal; He comes to fetch us and comes to bring us salvation. Then it is that we have to come to meet Him with a beating heart, shining eyes, and a luminous, loving soul. Those who possess this have the disposition of Christ, of heaven: whereas those who have it not, have not understood the Lord and have not made use of His grace and have not spread over their life the light of the loving, believing soul. Oh, my Lord, to keep watch, to await Thee, to long for

Thy approach, which will be my union with Thee, this is my heaven, which I will not surrender.

(*d*) "*Then all those virgins arose . . . And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil.*" "Give us of your oil!" Give us of your light; let there be light in us also, and brightness, joy, and good cheer—this is what the unbelieving, untrusting, careless, worldly souls say. We cannot give—is what the wise virgins answer—go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. No one will have light who does not care for his own oil; he will have no faith if he does not pray; no love if he does not repent his sins. The consolation and brightness of Christ will not be upon Him if he does not make sacrifices; he will be a dry soul if he does not anoint it with his ardour, zeal, and complete devotion.

(*e*) "*Give of thy light; of thy oil do not give.*" This is a wise saying. In another place the Lord says: Your good deeds, example, and virtues shall shine, and with these shall you direct men towards truth. This is our duty. But foolish would that man be who wishing to serve others would neglect himself. His oil, his virtue, and love, would dry up through this and naturally his lamp would go out also. We cannot help others at the expense of our soul-life; soon we also, as well as they, would become dark. We have to guard our oil; to tend our spiritual life; we will not neglect our prayers and meditations, we will partake of the Sacraments; discipline and educate ourselves; it is in this way that we will become good to others, for we have firstly been good to ourselves.

(*f*) "*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins,* *saying: Lord, Lord open to us.*" They knock at the door, but the door does not open. Those souls come which are late, whose eyes only opened late and whose heart was only moved late. They come with the unrecognised and neglected claims of immortality, with the stifled, misjudged instincts of their heart. Clad in the rags of shallow, sinful life they come to the eternal gates and knock; they arrive shipwrecked, they arrive exhausted, having lost the treasures of grace and time in the depths. This is how they arrive at the shores of eternal life; they come as beggars not as brides. What a pitiful and sad life and end of life! Jesus says: I do not know you. I do not see upon you the divine blood, the Christ-like type, the nobility of infinite vocation and hope . . . Get you gone! Whither? To whom? What for? This is the terrible judgment of a life which knew no aim or missed its aim!

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

"*For even as a man going into a far country, called his servants, and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one. . . . And he that had received the five talents went . . . and traded with the same, and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received the two gained other two. But he that had received one, going his way digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money. But after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them. And he that had received the five talents coming, brought other five talents, saying: Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant,* *because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* [*So it happened with the one who received two talents.*] *But he that had received the one talent, came and said : Lord, I know that thou art a hard man ; thou reapest where thou hast not sown, and gatherest where thou has not strewed. And being afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth ; behold here thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him : Wicked and slothful servant . . . thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with usury.*" (*Matt.* xxv. 14.)

(*a*) The talents are variously distributed ; some have five, others two, others one. These are natural and supernatural gifts which the *ego* has to work up into an individual, beautiful life. Work, gather, create—says the Lord—no one goes into " the joy of his Lord " because he has five or two talents, just as the one talent is not a hindrance for someone to go into the joy. This is where God has placed us, this is how He has equipped us, and whatever we may be like we have the strength to go into His joy. The *ego*, the soul, is the chief thing. This soul in its consciousness is faced with its own talents, which are not from itself, and its happiness depends on whether it says : Behold my Lord, here I am ; I give Thee thanks and rejoice that I exist, I will make use of my talents and will serve Thee !

(*b*) No one went into the " joy of his Lord " because he gained five or two new talents, if by this we mean the outward achievements of our mental gifts, such as scientific works, oratorical success, riches, fame, inventions. Outward success is not our individuality but rather one or another of its functions, and it often depends on factors which are outside the *ego*. If work and success were the criterion then not man would be the aim but the work, and man would be merely the means to it. Furthermore, do outward work and success satisfy anyone? Deeds and works are only reflections and fragments of the inner world. Let us therefore not work for success and fame and let it not worry us if we are unlucky in this respect.

(*c*) The pith of existence is neither in the talents nor in success; we do not live for the sake of being scientists, artists, technicians, men of culture; these are all secondary items of the great world-development; but the value of existence is the work done for the glory of God in accordance with our talents. Our value is not that we have five talents, neither are we valueless because we have only one talent, but our value consists in the faithful accomplishment of our duty and in our expectation of the "joy of the Lord." We know that God gave us what we have; we know that we have to be like Him in the shaping of our forces, in thought, will, feeling, faith, and love. We know that life has an infinite meaning; it is towards this that we go in a trusting, laborious life.

(*d*) "*Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it him that hath ten talents. . . . For to everyone that hath shall be given . . . but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away.*" Those who make use of the talents for the shaping of the beautiful inner world continually abound in joy and will continually have more, deeper, and purer joy; whereas those who work for the world, for popularity, for the gratification of desire, will become poorer and poorer. The older they become the sadder they will be, "and whilst you vainly chase the butterfly of your hopes, your life passes and you find yourself at the end of your course."

THE LAST SUPPER

"*And on the first day of the Azymes the disciples came to Jesus saying: Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the pasch? . . . But when it was evening, he sat down with his twelve disciples.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 17.) "*And began to wash the feet of the disciples.*" (*John* xiii. 5.)

(*a*) On the evening of Maundy Thursday the room of the Last Supper is filled with the great soul of Jesus. Souls radiate their influence and their spirit continues in their remembrance. Coals give out the heat of the sun which shone many thousands of years ago; great souls radiate their warmth in their works and institutions. In this sense there is no work or institution that can compare with that of the Sacrament of the Altar. Not only the spirit of Jesus is present here, but He Himself, with the feelings of that sweet, wondrous Evening filled with love. His soul is a cloud; blessing pours forth from it and lightnings blaze forth from it. His chief feeling is love, on account of which He cannot tear Himself away from us; He speaks of love, of unrivalled heroic feelings, and then in the entire knowledge of "having come from God, and returning to Him," He deeply humiliated Himself and washed His disciples' feet. He speaks no more but kneels in front of each one in humility, that they should be thrilled by the feeling of how much He loves them! Let us feel that which Christ felt. Deep fire glows in His eyes; He is excited; His hands are hot; feverish feelings possess His soul. He has to part; this is torment and agony to His heart; but His love conquers; as a remembrance He leaves His mysterious, sacramental presence here. His love had not to deny its nature; He wishes for union and also creates it. Behold Jesus at the feet of His disciples; If He did not love so much He would not be so humble, and if He was not so humble, He would not love so much. Away with the unfeeling, stony, desolate frame of mind; we also will love our brethren so much as to want to kiss their feet.

(*b*) He sees the Easter lamb in front of Him and there opens before His spiritual eyes the perspective of that terrible night when two million Israelites arose to break through the army of the Pharaoh. In front of them lay the sea, beyond it the desert. A great intercessor, the eighty-year-old Moses, touches the sea with his rod and the sea parts in two so as to make way for Israel and to engulf the Pharaoh. This was a picture of humanity hurrying towards its eternal grave in the night of its sins; but the Son of Man steps before them and with His staff, His cross, He opens the ways of salvation and closes hell. It is in memory of this great escape that we have the new sacrifice, the Holy Mass. It is the remembrance of our great deliverance, the holy sign of the closing of our eternal grave and damnation. We wish to take part in it girded up, ready for the journey, with rod in hand, showing our readiness for the service of God—so as to take part in it in light of the memories of thousands and thousands of years.

(*c*) He then prepares Himself for sacrifice; He conceals that pure body of His, that fiery blood with its passion for sacrifice, conceals it under the appearance of bread and wine, and says: This do in remembrance of me; present me in this way, present me for your own selves. This means that we deserve to die for ever because of our sins, but Jesus dies instead of us and we are delivered. The conception of sacrifice is this: the adoration of God and the appeasing of God by means of an offering which here is the life of Jesus. All of us ought to have died because of our sins; the Lord would not have accepted the amends of anyone; but He ordered Jesus so that through His sacrifice He could have mercy on us all. We believe, O Lord, and rejoice but we ask: Why didst Thou wish it to be so? The answer is this: Just as the Lord revealed His almightiness in the visible creation—His mountains, oceans, flowers, and abysses—so in the sweet, sometimes hard, life of Jesus, full of heroic love—in this deep, high, and magnanimous moral creation—He again revealed Himself, but now rather His moral qualities, His holiness, righteousness, and mercy. He wished to possess our hearts and to lead mankind into this deep stream of life. This is how we should look on Jesus and His adorable sacrifice. We look on Him on bended knees and give thanks, we who live through Him.

(*d*) "*Do this do for a commemoration of me.*" (*Luke* xxii. 19.) The mysterious renewal of My suffering and sacrifice have I shown you; I conceal Myself, under the forms of bread and wine. That is where I pay homage, atone, and pray for you. Offer this great treasure to the Lord as though it were your own. My love and merit does not miss its aim with God; My merit is heard according to its measure. Come therefore ye also; through Me it is that ye are to commend the worry, trouble, and poverty of your hearts to the grace of God. "My remembrance" will be your assurance and consolation. Since then there is no other sacrifice upon earth, we offer this one all the more readily upon millions of our altars. Let us highly value it; let us make use of it; by so doing we console Jesus, we make amends to God, and enrich ourselves.

"TAKE YE, AND EAT: THIS IS MY BODY"

"*And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to the disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat: This is my body.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 26.)

(*a*) Nowhere are the great designs of God and the petty ones of man so contrasted with each other as here. Elsewhere we measure the world with our varying ideas; we look into it, and at one time we find it great and at another small; we create systems only to destroy them; our development proceeds upon ruins; even faith builds upon the ruins of our small ideas. It is sufficient for us that the loving Jesus said: This is my body. His presence is grace and a feast to us, even if we do not comprehend it. The Apostles passed it on to us; this *mysterium* began its victorious career in the world with the Gospel. The "*Ecclesia Christofora*" carved and painted the ring, the lute, and the palm on the walls of the catacombs, these eloquent symbols of Jesus' love. He brought up an immaculately pure generation with His bread and wine, which sought heaven. . . . The ideas of this generation were filled with Him, its songs spoke of Him, all its altars were consecrated to Him. It could find nothing greater that it could have believed in, loved, sung about, painted, and carved in stone. These are the tracks upon which we also shall proceed. We believe; our faith is a feast of strength and hope.

(*b*) Brains are not sufficient for the comprehension of this mystery, inspired brains are necessary, such as love. Jesus acted thus because He loved. Love is a creative force; it is love which inspires will to become great. He created the world because He loved; He again creates a new world because He loves. This love inspires to faith; those who are able to love are able to believe; "*Nos credidimus caritati*"*!* None of our questions can be answered except by love. Have we a Redeemer? Is Christ God? Does He forgive? Can one die for the soul? Must faith be loved more than life itself? Can there be an eternal hatred—hell? Love understands this; without love there is no solution to these questions. Do we believe in Christmas? If yes, then we can believe in Easter. And if we believe in Easter, why should we doubt the Sacrament of love?

(*c*) The body which is given for you, that ye should not perish; it is instead of you that I stand before the justice of God; His anger will crush me. This is not injustice but the fiery revelation of that love which satisfies and atones. See this fire burning with dazzling colours; it is I who have kindled it so that ye might warm yourselves and that through me and in me ye might love God with new, fiery love. It is with these sacrificial feelings that Christ is present in the Holy Mass, it is with these feelings that He goes to God, stands between us and Him, and it is because of His love and His glowing wounds that we beg and hope for grace from God. . . . It is for us that Christ gives Himself up . . . what joy, what treasure this is to us, and what a sacrifice the Holy Mass is!

"THIS IS MY BLOOD"

"*And taking the chalice he gave thanks: and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 27.)

(*a*) The holy blood of Jesus is eternal, youthful force, because it is divine blood; it is from the blood that the energy of life, the temperament, depends. "The soul is in the blood." This is that regenerating, refreshing strength. It is from the life-giving strength of this blood that Christianity and Christ-like souls have the freshness of virginal, pure youth and their inexhaustible fertility; neither upon its Credo, Gospel, preaching, and laws, nor upon its life can one find the traces of old age. This is the blood which gives the enthusiasm of the Saints and their glowing passions. They are ready for everything who whisper with devout ardour: "I take the cup of the Lord and call His name for help." "Who will part me from the love of Christ?" As long as this blood fires us there is no trouble; we guard this blood, We drink the holy Grail with reverence, we imbibe its force. We may say with Mary Stuart: "Ye can rob me of everything, but two treasures ye cannot deny me: my faith and the royal blood running in my veins." We are a divine generation; our mystery, care, and treasure is the divine blood.

(*b*) This blood makes us brave; it is not content with existing but wishes to spread and conquer; "it educates to bravery and boldness" (*Tertullian*). We will strive against evil in the strength of this blood, and we are sure to conquer, for (1) It overflows our soul with the feelings of actual love; our entire being feels that Christ loves with sweet, clinging love. This we feel at our first Communion, then in the ecstasies of youth, and at the frequent Communions of our mature age. We love and possess it; we embrace it and do not let it go, and in this holy blood we possess the end of our achievements and the testament of eternal life. (2) We conquer evil with joy; the rejoicing soul has no difficulties; joy is the pledge of victory; we are even able to die with it. Even in the darkness of death it opens a sure way for us: *Proficiscere anima christiana* . . . Go even into death with trust, Christian soul! We conquer our difficulties with love and joy.

(*c*) St. Catherine of Siena accompanied a knight to the scaffold and arranged his head on the block; then she knelt in front of him and caught the severed head in her apron. "Some passionately sweet love seized me"—she writes to her confessor—"when the blood of the victim splashed upon me and dripped down me, for I thought of someone else who loved me so that He willingly shed His blood for me." Holy Communion continually places that Other One before us, who loves us so much that He sheds His blood, washes our soul in His blood. "O blood and fire, O fire and blood!" (*St. Catherine of Siena.*)

THE BLOOD OF JESUS IS OUR STRENGTH

(*a*) *The blood of Jesus* is an infinite treasure, "*pretium magnum*," the great price of our soul! The infinite mercy of God is the frame of this chalice. Whence comes this blood? From the grace of God. Let us look upon its source; it is with the throbbing of His Holy Heart that its circulation started, then it streams forth; then it was shed . . . behold its rocky way, in its mist we see the rainbow of the graces of the Holy Ghost. Behold its eternal strength; the "*pondus æternitatis*," the energy of eternity, works in it. How do the Saints from heaven and the suffering souls in purgatory view the streaming of this Holy Blood upon our souls? This is how we look upon it also, with zealous wonder and gratitude.

(*b*) His blood is upon us; it cleanses us; this is the dew of our souls; because of it we do not wither. In our Holy Communions we sprinkle our feelings and good intentions with it; we beg for its blessing in everything, in our deeds, and upon the suffering souls. "Blood—only blood can extinguish anguish," said an ailing friend to Henry Suso. We also make use of it.

(*c*) His blood is in us. "I am the vine, ye are the shoots," as if He would have said: Ye live from my blood. His warm life streams into us; we imbibe it. His blood burns in our veins and glows upon our face. St. Agnes said: "His blood reddens my cheeks." It is His blood we spare if we magnanimously offer ours; for it is not love to squander the blood of Christ and spare our own.

ADORATION, THANKSGIVING AND ATONEMENT OF JESUS IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

"*For this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 28.)

(*a*) The Last Supper was primarily a sacrifice; under the form of bread and wine Jesus was present with the character and motives of sacrifice. The first motive was adoration and thanksgiving. In the unapproachable silence of the mystery Jesus prays. He excels in this. This is His mission, His grace, this is His inspiration and the crown of His genius. The prayer of Christ! We cannot imagine how deep it delves nor to what heights it soars! His soul flies with outspread seraph's wings betwixt God and the world; He overshadows the earth; He strives upward, more and more to the heights, and His divinely inspired soul sings its hymn that changes earthly tones into the song of the spheres. In His prayers the miseries of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are mingled with the triumphant hymns of Resurrection and the Ascension. O sublime, holy, chosen, praying One; in every Holy Mass Thy praying soul, full of hymns and psalms, is poured forth. "*Sileat a facie Domini universa terra*," heaven and earth listen to Thy prayers. Do you wish to praise God with deep, true feelings, with the sufferings of the soul of Christ and with its glory? Here you have the opportunity, here is the Holy Mass!

(*b*) The second motive is atonement. The victim dies for others; He unites the bitterest self-renunciation with the most glorious inspiration of love . . . this bitterness is sweet and therefore it becomes sublime. The soul of Christ hurries to death, hurries to save; "if I offer myself, then these can all live," is what He is continually saying; of course He offers Himself! of course He does it. These are the passions and feelings which make His soul glow now also; He becomes a crying soul. In the silence of the Sacrament of the Altar we hear the cry of our Prophet, of our Martyr; we hear "the cry of the blood." Samuel cried the whole night for Saul to the Lord; Jesus cries day and night for us. Let us learn atonement from Him: a frame of mind which is strong, resisting, which cries for the good, which cries for the sinners, and let us make atonement to the Heart of Jesus itself, which is misunderstood and despised by so many.

(*c*) The third motive of Jesus is begging, praying. We are in need of an immense amount of grace so as to withstand evil and to do good; and to persevere and develop. We need grace to awake to the joyful consciousness that God loves us, that He does not curse us; we are in need of help and protection against the rotting and drying-up of our soul, just as much as against the scorching sunshine and rotting rain. For this, too, Jesus cries! Just as He prayed on the mountain, in the forest, and upon the seashore, so does He also pray here. Here we may learn to pray from the depth of the heart. To pray with Him means to pray perseveringly and reassuredly.

"DO THIS FOR A COMMEMORATION OF ME"

" *Do this for a commemoration of me.*"

(*a*) The Holy Mass is the presentation of the loving, humiliated Christ who pacifies God. The Holy Scripture and liturgy speak of body and blood. Here is my broken body . . . here my spilt blood. Gibbons calls it "a terrible secret" and cannot believe it; we too are shaken, but because of our strong faith we believe, though shaken and moved. We believe that the Lord so loved us that He went to His death and in His holy mystery remained among us as a sacrifice. The broken body and spilt blood moves everyone; no one would tread upon the blood but avoid it out of reverence; we present Jesus to God in this state.

(*b*) What feelings can possess the broken body, that heart which sheds its blood? (1) He is annihilated in humble, deep reverence; "I have sunk into the deep mud," He cries. "I am Thy servant, infinite God." He feels that the weight of the world weighs upon Him, the loathing of God. (2) He trembles; it costs Him much, costs Him suffering and death. (3) And still the inner world of the One making sacrifice is fiery and warm. He longs to make His sacrifice, for He knows what He attains with it. We have to share these feelings of Jesus. It is then that we will attain prayer, atonement, and ardour. There is no deeper, more fiery and zealous feeling than to be a voluntary sacrifice. If a mother dies for her child, if a friend sacrifices himself for another, then we see what depths there are, what beauty and charm. This is what is present here.

(*c*) Let us have confidence in the Holy Mass. Christ is the Head of the Church, Head bent in reverence, a suffering, bowed Head. This Head overshadows the wounded body. This Head always adores, always burns and aches. This relation of Christ to God is tremendous but at the same time absolutely victorious. Of course we have trust in this holy, praying victim who prays for us with the passions of His warm, feeling, stabbed heart. These are the feelings we have to share with Christ; this will be the right way of hearing Mass.

Feasts are the signs of good friendship or rather com- nity of life. We eat together, live together. Holy

Communion also means community of life with Christ, in three respects.

(*a*) Community with Christ who wishes to live, to renew life, and spread it. He wishes to live with us, and wishes to live one thing with us. His own life, the strong, divine life is what He wishes to experience in us. The symbol of this strong life is not the lute hung upon the willow ; it does not look at the running waters of a foreign Euphrates ; not groaning is its song, but soul, rejoicing, conscious devotion, and enterprising spirit fill it ; and it is in its soul that its waters find their source, it is bathed in its tears and is elevated by the flow of its own soul. This devotion we start with *purification* ; this hard work which leads the ideas of God into us we continue with practical, faithful love, in which though we hand ourselves over, at the same time we win ourselves back. We give our soul up to God and receive it back filled with strength, spirit and feelings. We experience God so that we may live all the more forcibly and actively.

(*b*) Community with Christ who is starting out to die. Into the spirit of the Eucharistia are woven the shadow, the treason, the bitterness of life, the face of Christ sweating blood in the shadow of the Olives, stains of blood and the cross. This is the spirit of Holy Communion. The Master whom the cross calls beckons to those sons of His who are not ripe for the cross and for suffering. He encourages ; tells us to approach. Each wave of His agony sweeps along our soul and makes us shudder. We sit around Him like the candidates for martyrdom on the benches of the Colosseum ; we also have to descend to the arena ; the more we descend the nearer is the suffering

Christ to us; His spirit touches us and intoxicates us; love brings sacrifice!

(*c*) Community with Christ starting out for resurrection. The one who prepares to die out of love has to live very intensely, and he who lives very intensely does not finally die in death either. Love does not teach us to die, and when it demands death it does it for the more valuable life. Its hymn is life, its flower is joy and enthusiasm. So it suffers death also for the sake of the re-birth. To die with Christ always means being reborn, means a more valuable life, blossoming forth and renewal. This is the philosophy of self-denial; to capture life as the stream rushing down from the hills so that it may advance still further.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

(*a*) We seek for the deeper and richer life which the expressions of the Holy Scripture promise us: "*Lignum vitæ, verbum vitæ, corona vitæ, panis vitæ, semen vitæ*" and the key to this life is the union with Christ. It is of this union that the presence of the bread reminds us in the Eucharist; eat, but take care, for eating is only the sign of spiritual union. Souls are united when they think and feel the same thing. What is Holy Communion? Union of souls in the community of ideas, the welding of hearts in the unity of feeling. True Communion is being filled with the sentiments of Christ, being fired with the feelings of Christ, the reflection of Christ being mirrored in our eyes, upon our brow, lips and speech, love and life, upon our entire life, upon the whole man. We have to communicate in such manner as to fill our soul with the face of the Lord. What a reassuring and enjoyable contemplation! We look at Him and He looks at us. "Il me vise et je le vise." Every time we look at the Lord so assuredly our soul becomes united with Him and finds rest in Him.

(*b*) Let us view the scenes of the reassurance of the soul in the Holy Scripture, they are real scenes of Holy Communion. There He sits in Bethany and Mary is at His feet. This also is Communion. It is not food but union. The eyes of Mary do not only sink into the eyes of the divine Saviour, but they sink also into His soul, the loving soul rests in her betrothed. Rest in the betrothed, this also is Communion. Let us enter upon the first Maundy Thursday into the room of Holy Communion. Anxious ideas are at rest there, and eleven souls cling to the Lord who prays for them. This is Communion. Not because of the food but because of the reassurance in the Master. Let us look at the Easter Morning, this is the Communion of Magdalene. How this doubting soul broken in its hopes is able to be united and reassured in the feelings of the Master, in those victorious feelings. On the Easter afternoon let us look at the way of the disciples of Emmaus; two men who have renounced their hopes; how such two narrow-minded hearts catch fire and then are reassured in the presence of the great Soul. This also is Communion. And the eve of Easter is the Communion of the whole assembly of Apostles. In our Holy Communions let us be reassured in the encouraging, victorious feelings of the Lord Jesus. Let us transfigure our worldly ideas and our often disunited soul which cannot rule itself. Let us find reassurance for our soul upon *the heart of Jesus*.

(*c*) The Sacrament of the Altar does not only reassure our soul because we rest our thoughts in Jesus but also because it exceedingly fortifies our faith. "*Est enim memoria mirabilium.*" Our faith stands opposite the wonderful works of God. It is a great memory in which the Incarnation and suffering of Christ are renewed. A great remembrance which gives rise to so many wonderful manifestations of the human soul, so much secret asceticism and sublime ecstasies. "*Est fidei mysterium*"—the secret of faith. Miracles form and accompany this secret. Such is the miracle of Bolsena. The priest saying the Mass doubted if there is verily the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and behold at the Elevation of the Host the wine in the chalice changed to red blood, boiled up, poured out, and spread over the altar; it is in memory of this that Pope Urban IV. had the magnificent cathedral of Orvieto built. Not so much these miracles but the living miracles, the wonderful saints, prove the reality of the Sacrament of the Altar, who ate no other food than the Eucharist and who were so strong that they conquered everything. Let us also be the living proofs of the Eucharist by our ardent life which we gather from the Sacrament of the Altar. Let us be changed by it. Our ideas "*infirmæ providentiæ*" are weak, dull ideas. Let us exchange these for the ideas of the Lord God; in the Sacrament of the Altar He implants them in our soul as if with a burning, scorching stamp. How are we to go after men, who, even if they were great geniuses, died with the sigh of "more light"? Such a spiritual life, soul-life, does not impose upon us, whatever poems are born of it, whatever statue he is able to carve and in whatever colours he is able to breathe his ideal upon wood and canvas. What we want is a life which is able to shape the entire man.

(*d*) Finally what we need is the invigorating atmosphere of pure feeling. Two kinds of love occupy our heart: *Charitas et cupiditas*. *Cupiditas* is the lowly, sensual love. We have to occupy our heart with holy love so that that other greedy, instinctive, passion should diminish in us. "*Nutrimentum charitatis et imminutio cupiditatis . . .; ubi charitas, ubi cupiditas non est.*" As soon as love, the pure *charitas*, is lit, then the encouragement of the other flame runs short and the flame becomes extinguished. "*Castissima caro sopit concupiscentiam.*" The touch of the purest and most virginal body breaks the law of our hot blood. This is how we are to communicate; then the Sacrament of the Altar will be the source of rich life.

SACRIFICE

"*Sacrifice there must be and Christ is the sacrifice.*"

(*a*) There has to be sacrifice now and always, till such walk upon this sinful earth who atone God. This is how the Eternal has to be adored . . . with annihilation. Since the beginning this knowledge has kindled the fire of the patriarchal altars; complete abandonment is indicated by burning to ashes; and upon Golgotha Jesus gives Himself over for us entirely and completely. He pours out His soul and blood and becomes the new expression of the fact that God is the Lord and All and that He has to be adored and loved and His offended Sublimity has to be atoned at every price. This is the throbbing of Jesus' sacrifice; His glowing heart sends the feelings, with His dying gasp, into His great, wounded feverish, mystical body.

(*b*) The feeling, adoring, atoning heart of Jesus is our sacrifice here and now. It is difficult to habituate ourselves to the often unclean pictures of the poorly altars and to the mended candlesticks; it was easy to do so on the altars of the catacombs where the chalice of wood with the bread beside it stood upon the graves of the martyr covered with a stone. It is hard to make ourselves at home kneeling behind the babbling priest who is dressed in ragged missal robes; it was easy in the prisons of Nicodemia where the presbyter Lucian, who was chained to earth, placed the chalice and bread upon his own breast. With our faith let us break through rags and appearances; it is Christ who is present here with the passions of sacrifice and if we force our way to Him then that fiery, mysterious secret atmosphere which is filled with blood-sweat will seize us. It is we who are to bring down the Holy Heart into fatigued, spiritless surroundings.

(*c*) The Holy Mass is sacrifice to that Polish priest who stands in the lead-mines of Siberia with chained feet and in hair-cloth, stands by the dripping rocks and says the following prayer over the wine and bread: "My holy Father, Almighty God, receive this immaculate sacrifice"; being humiliated and chained in this bitter compulsion he is well able to comprehend the heart of Christ. The great Sufferer becomes dear and precious to him. Holy was that Mass which was served secretly at night to the prisoners deported to Australia, and the punishment of death even could not keep them away from it; they felt that what they receive at such a price is great and holy, and felt that it cost far more to Christ. Holy was the Mass to the warriors Hunyadi, Skander Bey, Szobieszki before they went into battle; they felt that heroical exertions find their Christ-like source here. Holy was the Mass to Louis XVI when it was said at two o'clock at night, on the last night of his imprisonment! The voice of the priest trembled, the bell sounded as a death-knell, and with what a renunciation the poor king felt what sacrifice is. It is this sacrifice, this bread which is broken for us; it is of this fiery blood from this bitter chalice that we also receive . . . "Ye proclaim the death of the Lord," ye who say the Mass render yourselves capable of similar sacrifice. His memory awakes the soul; it impels us to continue His life, His feelings. In the Holy Mass we are absorbed in Jesus and we take His love and grace home with us; the scent of incense and myrrh must be felt upon us during the day.

BETRAYAL

"*Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray me . . . and after the morsel, Satan entered into him.*" (*John* xiii. 21.)

(*a*) Unworthy communion is a great sin, firstly against faith. Faith stands guard beside the Sacrament of the Altar and points with special emphasis to this secret; this is the "*mysterium fidei.*" The Apostle stands guard: "what I have taken that I give"; entire martyrdom also stands guard here. The treasure of the Church is the Gospel, its pearl is the Sacrament of the Altar; this is what it guards, this is what it carries on the way of its pilgrimages; this Sacrament is what the Church builds its churches for and sings its hymns; this is what it surrounds with the symbolic wreath of its liturgy. Those who communicate unworthily spill the Chalice of the Church, extinguish its Lamp, bruise its Altars, tread upon its Pearl. Such uncouth ones do not comprehend the Apostles and Martyrs, neither the adoring genius of Christianity which excels in stone and colour; and the least of all do they comprehend the farewell-taking Heart of Jesus which honours us in the Sacrament! Oh, do not let us sin against the light! Let us have absolute homage for the holy mystery of Jesus; and the first requirement of homage is the pure heart.

(*b*) Unworthy communion is sin against the love of Jesus. He does not wish for servants but for good friends; He wishes to be near us and wishes us not to forget Him. He wishes to be united with the psychology of love and to remain in us. Therefore every heart is to be the abode of love which walks in disguise upon earth; it should open to love in such a way as to assure Christ by saying: Here Thou art at home, here Thou canst rest in peace. We have to be faithful and true, we have to be bodyguards. And what do we become by unworthy communion? We betray the Lord! We lock Him out of our house; we shame and despise Him. What a sorrowful pilgrimage of the Lord to souls who receive Him with their lips and expel Him from their hearts! Oh, my Jesus, give me indomitable faith with which to serve Thee in my Holy Communions!

(*c*) Frequent unworthy communion leads to obduracy for we dumb our senses concerning divine love. Conscience slowly dies off; although it receives grace its spurrings become weaker and weaker. It is not permitted to water flowers with mud, to strangle souls with sacrilege. The moral effect is also evil; for in those "who eat judgment for themselves," and get accustomed to it, great ideas become small and great motives become weak. Save us, our Lord, from being obscured and from the devil of impenitence! What a dreadful sight (joyless baseness and freezing lifelessness) surrounds the sacrament of love; that is why it does not spread its grace over us and in spite of gospel, salve, balsam, words, and *mysterium* we rot away. That is why there are many sick amongst you—says St. Paul—and many dead ones . . . from Judas on till to-day!

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Our preparation for Holy Communion:

(*a*) To look at Christ kneeling down, to view Him and wonder at Him and to cling to Him with ecstasy! When we view the ocean or the Alps and storms we would willingly kneel down; still more when we look at Jesus. We look at the height, depth, and infinity of His soul and we become submerged in it. We feel that He also looks at us. "Je le vise, il me vise." The sick ones are sent to the sea, to watch the sea and inhale its breeze which educates saints and heroes. Moses also taught the multitude poisoned by the snakes to look up to the symbol of eternity and rejuvenating life, to the brazen serpent. Then we sit in "the shade of the one for whom our soul thirsts," behold His shade, the white Host; if only His shadow falls upon us we already become healed. Therefore we are only to look with the eyes of faith, with the intuitions of faith . . . this glance draws out our soul.

(*b*) We are to trust Christ ardently. He says: Ye will not die, ye will live. You will live well, beautifully, and strongly and you will not only live but live for me and according to me, "*vives propter me.*" You will live when the day of the dead will overcome you; live when you struggle and walk in the wilderness. Life is my magic circle, it is with this that the atmosphere of the Sacrament of the Altar is filled. Therefore we go and say: If only we touch the hem of His dress we are healed; the hem of His dress is the veil of the bread and wine covering Him. And we not only become healed but are transformed into Him. He promised it!

(*c*) We approach with love; our love for Him turns to joy; for it is He who is here and who loves me. He is our treasure and sweet soul. We enjoy Him and are reassured in Him. Love dissolves, unites and transfixes; the love of Jesus also does this. His greatness oppresses us first, but His love brings us to our senses and we encircle Him saying: We have found Him whom we sought; we encircle Him and do not let go of Him. This rejoicing love lights up our adoration. There is no deep adoration where there is no joy; adoration is the intimate joy in God. The grace of holy purity likewise penetrates our soul. The rejoicing souls are also pure ones for: "Die Reinheit ist die eigentümliche Gabe fröhlicher Geister"[1]; their native country is the sunshine and their voice is continual song. Therefore we make our preparations for our Holy Communions with faith and humility, hope, love, joy, and adoration.

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[1] Purity is the special quality of joyous souls.

THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion :

(*a*) (1) Our first feeling is our deep homage : The King, the Sublimity comes ! Our heart beats and our knees weaken. The Moslems lay prostrate before the pilgrim troops coming from Mecca so that horses and camels should pass over them. We spread the carpet of our feelings and passions before our king who enters our hearts ; we strew our flowers before Him. We are dust, therefore, meet to be under Thy feet. (2) Then we see the King sitting upon the throne, upon the throne of our heart, who looks at our endeavours with love. What visions are these ! What mountains, *montes Dei !* (3) But after all we stand before our courteous Lord and lead Him into our abode ; clean is our house and there are flowers in our windows. Welcome ! We fall prostrate before Thee as Abraham, as Judith, as Salome . . . as the Virgin Mary.

(*b*) Then praise breaks forth from our soul ; for Heaven is here present, therefore the song of angels is needed, the " Holy, Holy, Holy." And where are the Angels ? Oh, my Lord we are not even Prophets, but only Thy unstable-hearted servants. But Thou my Lord dost not therefore reject the flute. Angels sang above and shepherds played the flute below. In our heart also the Gloria resounds. . . . We are in the furnace of love and sing with the three youths ! We do not stifle our songs !

(*c*) We are reassured, we rest upon this His breast, we become united with Him in love. Every lover does so, encircles, embraces, and gives a kiss ; Thou didst also expect this from Simon the Pharisee and didst not refuse it even from Judas. "*Haec requies mea.*" We feel that Thou dost love us, Lord. We forget the fickleness of our heart and rejoice in Thy unchanging eternal love. And Thou dost endure us and, what is more, Thou sayest: Do not awake my heart's lover, let him rest by me. Oh, my heart, could I ever be torn away from Jesus? Even the idea of it hurts us; does the betrothed think of a parting before the altar? Neither do we, we acquiesce in the love of Jesus and our happiness will be the unconscious condition of our faithfulness.

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion:

(*a*) We disclose our soul and when we have already received the Lord then we also beg. "*Effundam in conspectu ejus orationem meam*": We pour forth our soul. We beg with clear mind, with a warm heart, and strong hand. As the masters of the Renaissance, the great geniuses who walked in leather aprons in their ateliers, so we too think great things prayerfully and touch our work also with working hands. We kneel and with our prayers mould, shape and hammer our soul. We have often "nicely asked" but have not strongly worked; we have whimpered but have not shaped; we have eaten but have not become stronger; we have worked carelessly; but now we pray and beg but also work with strong hands. "I will not let Thee go, my Lord, till Thou hast blessed me."

(*b*) We study our heart and soul according to the inspirations of Jesus. What is there in us already of solid virtue? What is the obstacle to our development and the danger to our progress? Have we already somehow acquired Christ-like life? Grace gives a start to many things but this work does not take shape and beauty upon itself. Oh, ye souls, ye poor artists who have not formed anything, ye are the pupils of desperation and not of inspiration. We look into ourselves with the eyes of a competent artist whom the grace of Jesus fires and helps.

(*c*) We offer ourselves, our heart and will, because Jesus asks and says: My son give me thy heart. We offer our body, so that it may be a living and beautiful sacrifice, "*vivens, beneplacens*." We offer our life, so that we may no more live in ourselves, but that we may live in Him. He seeks community of life and gives life; let us therefore give our heart, flesh and soul in return, and all this will then belong to Him if it develops according to His inspirations.

THE "NEW COMMAND" OF JESUS

"*A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you.*" (*John* xiii. 34.)

A new commandment, or rather a new edition of the old one awaits us. It is new for it is a Christ-like edition and the newness consists in:

(*a*) God loves Christ in us and it is this highest, supreme love that He pours upon us. He makes no difference in His love, He unites man and His only-begotten Son in the same love; the two have become one! Oh, how profoundly we are able to love if we love God in man. Man is no god, but the flame of the heart's love clasps these two at the same time. This is its force. Let us try to love God in men and to take their special individuality as a divine idea; we will then honour our fellow men and be fair towards their individuality. Love is the school of fairness, not that of being superior to others.

(*b*) Christ loves man divinely, that is with divine ardour; "*ignita caritate*," with fiery, flaming love. He pressed forward towards man with ecstasy; He came as "*speciosus forma*," robed in beauty; He came as one who brings life, "*vitam æternam*"; He came as "*sponsus sanguinum*," as the betrothed of self-oblivion and ardour, as the betrothed of blood and sacrifice. He followed us till He conquered us and He rejoices in the union of love. Behold the divine life of Jesus and likewise that of the soul! Do not let us mistrust; let us render ourselves happy by strong, ardent, conquering love. Let us love very much, love with sacrifice, love boundlessly, let us love, and do not let ourselves be vanquished by difficulties, failure, and indifference; let us love; the world will be the better for it.

(*c*) It was a new company permeated by love that He left behind Him as a heritage: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." (*John* xiii. 35.) But it was a vital, free, creating love, not stupid, helpless love. Love which creates and educates a healthy, capable generation: "the generation of the sons of wisdom is obedience and love." The ways of the wise are the ways of love.

"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED"

"*Let not your heart be troubled: You believe in God, believe also in me. . . . If not, I would have told you.*" (*John* xiv. 1.)

(*a*) Jesus urges his disciples to absolute trust and attachment. Trust me, believe me; I will not cheat you; if it would not be so as I have taught you, I would have told you. We often look up to Jesus with tears in our eyes when darkness and doubt pass across our soul. Concerning this, our duty is: "Let not your hearts be dismayed." Let us place ourselves into the atmosphere of the eve of the Passion. Jesus takes farewell, His love renders parting an agony; He embraces His friends, washes their feet, then leaves His flesh and blood as a remembrance. Then casting His eyes towards heaven He sings His farewell song; He lifts the dark veil of the future, and assures His disciples of His love. . . . Do not we feel that we cannot doubt Him?

(*b*) On this Holy Eve Jesus uncovers His heart with the utmost sincerity; without restraint He puts before our eyes the most sublime truths and sweetest consolations. He wished to place His soul, His mission, His love into true, intimate hearts; what He kept secret until now, that He now reveals. "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you, but now I go to Him who has sent me." Now therefore, I commit to your hearts that which is the most important, and what is that? I beg you, do not abandon me.

(*c*) If it were not so, I would have told you; I would tell you now, because I go away. I am faced with a cruel death on the cross; I do not cheat you; I would have told you. I assure you with the frankness of love and with the force of sacrifice that I tell the truth; you will gain one proof more in the Resurrection, so that my death may not trouble you. Do we need any other proof, and does not our heart find complete reassurance? Let us sometimes repeat: If it were not so, He would have told us. We believe Him because He loved us.

JESUS' FAREWELL SPEECHES TO HIS DISCIPLES

"*If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.*" (*John.* xiv. 23.)

(*a*) Let us love the Lord Jesus very much; our disposition towards Him shall be devotion, readiness, and faithfulness. One can also love Jesus languidly and not keep His word, but this the Lord does not call love. Who loves truly feels deeply and acts faithfully. To such a soul the Lord reveals Himself, and in what way? He goes to him and finds an abode with him, so that He is at home with him. "Home," what sweet reality! The home is not a wall, not furniture, but safety, reassurance, trust, and love. There the Lord is loved where He is as it were at home; where they honour and comprehend Him; where He is the Lord, the father of the family, and we sit upon His knee like His children, hang round his neck; speak to Him intimately, our eyes upon His eyes, and tell Him all that weighs upon our heart. Oh, what infinite grace: God wishes to be at home with us and to love us and be loved by us as at home! Oh, pure heart, thou sweetest home, the home of God!

(*b*) "*But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.*" (*John* xiv. 26.)

The Holy Ghost teaches; He gives more light, more emotion, ardour, contrition, purification; He gives a new heart and susceptibility; He shows life in another light as well as the world; He urges away from sin towards the good; He throws open the claims and depths of the soul; He awakes us to the consciousness of our celestial, immortal self. "And this is the proof that God has given us eternal life," that is, faith fills us with the knowledge that we have eternal life. "And this is our trust in Him that what we ask Him according to His will, He will hear us." He draws us to Himself and renders us stronger and better. At such a time we feel that the Holy Ghost is our Consoling Soul, whom Jesus has sent, and because of whom everything so happens with us and around us as if the Lord Himself were amongst us. Therefore we adore and love the Holy Ghost. The Soul of our soul, the tie of our soul with the Lord.

(*c*) "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.*" (*John* xiv. 27.) Jesus gave much to us: He gave us faith and martyrs; gave us words and Apostles; He gave us contrition and repentance; but best of all He gave us reassurance and peace: He gave us peace in ourselves by subordinating the body to the soul; He gave us peace with God and our fellow men by teaching us justice and love and by initiating us into it. It is from this peace that joy and happiness come even in bitterness and the testing of the soul in the storms of life. Jesus lays great stress upon this and has left this to us as our inheritance. We have to endeavour never to lose this peace—that it should be poured over our soul and accompany us like a soundless song. One may suffer, one has to make sacrifices; but peace one is not allowed to lose. "*Exsurge psalterium et cithara,*" my psalm, do not become dumb; my harp, be always heard!

JESUS THE TRUE VINE

"*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman . . . you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.*' (*John.* xv. 1-5.)

(*a*) Jesus descends from the Mount of Sion and sees the vineyard near by: its dark-green foliage flowers abundantly. His soul is immersed by the contemplation of vital life which makes the branches break forth from this vine, which builds cells, makes the foliage develop, and from the unpretentious flower forms the fiery, sweet, scented cluster. In His mysterious workshop dust and clay turn to honey, scent, and flavour, and the fire of the sunshine is infused into it. This is how the vital force of life and its charm emanates from Jesus into souls; He feels it and rejoices in it, and it is His strong desire to inject this life, strength, and beauty into souls; He wishes to change the commonplace life of man into fire, honey, and enjoyment; and there is enough in Him for every soul; on the shores of the Yang-tsze-kiang as in Alaska or Piccadilly it is He who gives life to souls and makes them live; it is from Him that they receive the impressions of supernatural life. Every man receives a stimulus from Christ; He draws them, enlightens them, gives them enthusiasm, and shows them their direction, for without Him we can do no supernatural good, that is, such good as leads to God. This is the impression which Jews, unbelievers, heathens, the faint-hearted, sinners, and saints receive. Oh, Thou, our sweet, mysterious vine, Thou indestructible source of life, what veins are Thine that send Thy graces throbbing in souls afire no less than in those that seemed but ashes?

(*b*) "*Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit, he will take away; and every one that beareth fruit, he will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . Abide in me: and I in you.*" We also have to cling to the vine with the passion of life and with the desire for happiness; for we are bound to Him with the bonds of our existence and His divine act, we are woven into Him and grown on to Him. There is no sense in the cut-off branch, nor in an existence which does not long for God and divine life; a soul which is grown on to Him and woven into Him has greedily to suck in that mysterious stream and has to open every cell to the throbbing of divine existence. Oh, Christ-like life, we wish for more and more of thee. As much as possible! We wish to flower, blossom, and bear fruit, that is, we zealously make use of the grace of Jesus, of the light which lights our soul, of the promptings of feeling, emotion, enthusiasm, and impetus. We take all these as the touches of God, with whom our soul comes into contact in the depths of existence. We could sing with joy to think of this influence which does not always touch our consciousness but which is still a real union. Yes, we abide in Him and He abideth in us. Oh, let the Christ-like life break forth in us with divine force!

(*c*) "*If anyone abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither.*" Those who resist the divine inspirations and the promptings which present themselves to their consciousness, cut themselves off from Christ and their soul withers. This process takes place slowly. The soul generally becomes coarse; because of its faithlessness divine influence loses its force, the consciousness of vital connection disappears, the warmth of Christ-like feeling cools and man escapes from the sphere of God's attraction. It cuts the bonds of love, and faithfulness, and often those of faith also. It becomes free as the cut-off and withering branch is free from the vine. What doth it profit if it shoot forth branches, if its foliage develops, if it has not the juice of the vine, and its blossoms do not ripen into fruit?

(*d*) "*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you.*" If ye are bound up with me and it is my soul which lights and glows in you and if ye partake of my life and feelings; if ye achieve that deep, true, inner union which gives rigour to the divine germ at the bottom of your souls, raises it to your conscious treasure, then ye will completely share my feelings and longings; ye will like what I like; ye will want what I want; your panting will be my breath; and your prayer my longing. Then it is that this inner, sweet life, the strong, ardent accomplishing of the will of God, the perseverance in all trouble, strong assertion, patience, and elevation, rejoicing hope—this higher, divine life will then be your prayer and when ye wish for this and beg for it, then I assure you, ye will obtain it. It is not to those who misunderstand the meaning of life but to those who understand their inner soul that Jesus promised: "You shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

"ABIDE IN MY LOVE"

"*Abide in my love.*" (*John* xv. 9.)

Let us learn from the Lord Jesus how He loves us.

(*a*) "I have loved you" . . . "with infinite love" . . . "He loved us first" and as such He longs for, rejoices in, and seeks our love. This is His temperament; that is, His soul is young, flowering, strong, and overflowing. "I approach you with love"—he says—"therefore love me." And He is able to give Himself up . . . to forget Himself . . . He is able to belong to someone else. This is what He wishes absolutely from us also: "If you keep my commandments," that is, if ye actively give yourselves to me—"you shall abide in my love." (*John* xv. 10.) This is what the Lord wishes; this breaks forth from His heart: "these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be filled." (*John* xv. 11.) Jesus wishes to rejoice in our love and to make us happy with it. Behold how youthful, soaring, and fragrant His soul is. The soul of Christ is to us as if we would look into a blossoming primeval forest! We comprehend already how the Gospel could flower forth from Him; we understand His parables and understand His sayings. How differently now this resounds in our soul: "for I say to you that there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance"; we understand this passionate longing and this "complete joy." Oh, my Lord, Thou sweet Lord! My soul becomes sweet if I love Thee in deeds, with complete and true devotion! Therefore, we continually ask: What shall we do? What?

(*b*) "*I will manifest myself to him.*" (*John* xiv. 21.) Love demands it; show me Thy Face. Jesus does it; He shows Himself; He transports and grafts Himself into our soul; He speaks to us so that we should recognise Him. He gives us eyes so that we should see Him, that we might have an inspired glance and sense for Him. Love sees and notices much that the glance of the numb soul does not take in. It sees the world differently, this work of God inspired by love; it sees the striving of the moral world-order differently and notices the harmonious fusion of disharmonies; it smoothes and sweetens the grinding and cruelty of nature with love, strength of mind, trust, and patience; in a word, it finds strength in itself, which it places into the world so as to adjust its crazy balance. With such love in our heart we will perceive God on mountains and meadows, flowers, and stars as well as in human life; such love will call forth in us a beautiful, agreeable life which is able to trust and to be reassured.

Only the loving souls have divine perception; "He that loveth his brother abideth in light." (1 *John* ii. 10.) "He that loveth not knoweth not God." (1 *John* iv. 8.) And knoweth neither the world nor himself.

LOVE AND THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

"*Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" (*John* xv. 13.)

(*a*) Jesus presents the sacrifice as the claim of deep, great love. Love wishes to make sacrifice. Love is sacrifice, devotion, and service, and all this comes from a deep, forceful emotion. Can one say that this feeling is sweet even in the bitter sacrifice? Hardly so. We are not to identify love with soft, sweet feelings. In nature death and suffering show that divine love also urges devotion and service. One shall serve the other, one shall die for the other. This is real love; the flower of the soul. What nature does under pressure, that we are to do willingly and readily. Love is stronger than death. But it is also sweet, tender, and enjoyable. We wish to educate our love to sacrifice; we wish to prove it by sacrifice; if it requires no sacrifice we must mistrust it!

(*b*) This sacrificial love is not given to us directly; we have to educate ourselves to it; firstly by understanding Jesus and the bountiful noble beauty of His love, His zeal, ardour, emotion, and fervour, in a word by entering into the atmosphere of His beautiful, pure, noble, warm personality. In such surroundings the educating influence does not depend upon commands and words but upon the right understanding of the word "infection." We have to move over into the clime of Christ-like feelings; other climates spoil our organism, we become weak and ailing. And if we get to learn this feeling then we influence others likewise. Let us manifest this superior frame of mind; men will actually come to like this better than the world of undisciplined imagination and that of voluptuousness and adulterous joys. Apostles, priests, parents, teachers, influence your surroundings with your soul!

(*c*) And if prompted by this love we would even give up our life, then do not let us complain about this; sacrifices and martyrdom are not losses but victories and gains. It is thus that life becomes deeper and purer and evil does not conquer it. Let us trust this love; it surely conquers. If many perish in moral epidemics, this is a great harm, but still we know very well that it is with love that we most effectually help the world. Even if there are many abysses and precipices yet the hills of the moral world are rooted in this love. Even if philosophy covers us with mist, it is this love which will be the sunshine which lifts the fog. Even if much rubbish swims on the tide of public life yet it is this love which continually makes the crystal wells spring forth. It is in this love that we trust, this will be our force also. Therefore we will spare neither self-abnegation nor sacrifice for the sake of this more valuable, more beautiful, and stronger love.

THE HOLY GHOST

"*But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth . . . he shall give testimony of me.*" (*John* xv. 26.)

(*a*) The Holy Ghost penetrates into souls and convinces them about the teachings of Christ. He first convinces them about sin, awakes their conscience and brings their terrible debt to their consciousness; He then awakes the feeling of responsibility reminding them that God has entrusted everyone's salvation into their own hands and that they have to work for it; He finally shows them the world in its true light and vanities and opposite this He makes the ideals glow so that they burn into our soul. Oh, what a mighty proof this is which turns our heart towards Christ! What an eloquent, convincing Apostle and teacher of Christ the Holy Ghost is! Our heart becomes enflamed for Him; He stirs our soul, He initiates, moves, and calls us: Come ye also this way! And those who pay homage to the Holy Ghost will also become testimonies and witnesses; "ye also shall bear witness." If ye will be holy, pure and ardent then the world will read from you that Christ also is good and holy and makes us good and holy. If ye will be virtuous and irreproachable then your lives will be the testimony of Christ's grace. Oh, let us testify that He is good, that He is Holy, that He is the Saviour, that He is the strong God!

(*b*) "*And now I go to him that sent me* . . ." (*John* xvi. 5.) I go to prepare a place for you, then I come to fetch you and take you there where I am, ye shall also be there. . . . These words ring unfamiliarly but we have to accustom ourselves to the fact that the infinitely greater part of existence is after death. The earth is merely the starting place of our existence, and then there are "many dwelling-places" full of treasure and beauty, happiness, and homeliness. These are wonderful revelations of the eternal God; they are depths into which the soul will plunge in bliss, beauties to be enjoyed without end, life that will fill the soul. Small is the earth, for man is great; but surely the infinite makes itself known to the soul in such a way as to fill it. We await the high tide of this inexhaustible life; it is in death that its flood-gates open. This will be the awakening! Death is the escape of the soul! We are on the way towards the doorstep of Thy house; Oh, admit us there!

(*c*) "*It is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you.*" (*John* xvi. 7.) Your love is very sensual, earthly; it must be more spiritual. Ye are attached to Me but your attachment is selfish. Ye would like Me to console and caress ye as the mother consoles and caresses her children. Ye would wish Me to lead you by leading-strings. In a word ye love Me with the senses. I do not say that you shall not love Me but I wish your virtue to be free from the suggestions of flesh and blood. I wish you to serve the good cause unselfishly and according to the soul, that the spiritual, the soul-man, may develop in you. This is what the Consoling Spirit gives. We do not serve for consolations and wages. Whether we feel consolation or not, whether we stand in sunshine or in night, we are faithfully to accomplish the Lord's will.

"I GO TO THE FATHER"

"*A little while, and now you shall not see me; and again a little while, and you shall see me; because I go to the Father.*" (*John* xvi. 16.)

(*a*) The Master saying farewell prepares His disciples in every way, so that they should come up to the mark at the time of great trials. I part from you—He says—ye will not see me with your bodily eyes, I go to my Father. Emptiness, darkness, and dejection will surround you, but in this darkness a new kind of a light will be needed, this emptiness will want a new content, this breach a new connection, and all this will be the Holy Ghost. It is from Him and through Him that your spiritual eyes will be opened and in Him ye will experience My presence. Jesus continually leads the sensual, natural man higher and higher; He does not only urge sunlight but spiritual light, light of the soul; He keeps awakening those energies of spirit and grace which have to sprout in the souls which are in contact with God. To be a Christian means as much as to be convinced of those divine forces which reach the soul and to experience them in ourselves, in our faith, trust, assurance, and our Christ-like striving for the better and the divine. Let us therefore embrace this spirit and let us not only be refreshed or dejected according to our impressions, but let us ask ourselves what the will of God may be in such and such circumstances, and let us act accordingly.

(*b*) "*Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*" (*John* xvi. 20.) Men of soul have a special sorrow which the world does not share, that world which does not share the longings and sorrows of Christ and which is superficial and without ideas. But that sorrow is an eminent quality of the soul, whereas the wanton pleasure of the world is prodigality. We are sorrowful when we see our sinfulness, unsatisfactoriness and frailty—when we notice how far we are from the true, noble inner goodness—when we notice what rough, raw, splintery material we are out of which even the artist can only with difficulty hew beauty and joy; but the more we feel this and the more we take it to heart with an interested and humble soul, it is the soul which will come forward in us, sense will appear and we will assimilate it and become nobler; so our sorrow will change to joy. The key to this pure source of joys is guarded by the soul and not by the soulless cruel world.

(*c*) "*A woman when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*"

Everyone who works for the shaping and development of new humanity and new, better generation somehow shares also the pains of child-birth. The parent, teacher and Apostle enjoy the sorrows and joys of giving birth.

How much difficulty, disappointment, opposition and bitterness befall them, how much they suffer and long till at last they see the soul sparkling through the insolence of instinct. But if after this they succeed in bringing up a man, a Christian, noble soul, then they no more remember their travail in their joy that there is one "man" more in the world. Let the teacher pray and work with soul; he is to give soul, let him awake soul chiefly with his example and personality; let him think of his own pride, his past, and maybe the present also, with which he caused sorrow to his teachers and the Holy Ghost.

"I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD"

"*In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence. I have overcome the world.*" (*John* xvi. 33.)

(*a*) The word "distress" has a deep meaning; it indicates all the blood which was spilt in the following of the Lord. This bloodshed begins with the stoning to death of the martyr Stephen and continues with the strife of Christianity against the Roman world-power. It is this distress which asserts itself in every sufferer, who in his suffering recognises Christ's crown of thorns. Distress in which everything grates and groans, where souls suffer agony and worlds are transformed—Jesus foresees all this in His soul! A great sublime happening which draws forth from us the feelings of homage and wonder; which flows along gently and shows the miracles of heroism. Many say that they do not understand why we suffer with so much patience and so much disdain of death, and why we so highly value this state. No one understands this who does not rise to the sources of patience and does not derive therefrom the motives of patience and sacrifice. Christ suffers for us, for our sins, out of love; we will also endeavour to follow Him in this way.

(*b*) "*I have overcome the world* . . ." in myself and I overcome it in my followers. "He would not have verily overcome it,"—says St. Augustine—"if He did not continually overcome it in us." He is the reason of our strength and victory. That "I have overcome," that resolute, strong, expressive "I," that is what explains the underlying reason of facts and actions in Christianity. Those who leave this "I" out of consideration will find our faith and strength a problem; to them Christianity is incomprehensible and a contradiction appears between history and our humble faith. It is to this "I" that we cling; we receive His force, His light, His inspiration, and in the Sacrament of the Altar it is He Himself whom we receive and who gives us life.

(*c*) Those who look upon faith merely as the action of the brain, do not comprehend all this; the intellectual element does not explain the strength. The strength of religion is the devotion in faith concerning the knowledge that Jesus is the Son of God who has redeemed us and who supplies us with divine force. We believe with a whole heart . . . this is how we present ourselves to Christ. Negri says: "The walk of Emile Zola is heavy and imposing like that of the elephant which breaks its way through the forest with its immense weight and crushing paw. But the elephant is bound to the plains and slopes; only eagles' wings reach to the heights of the Himalayas." Amongst the educated this is mostly the cause of faithlessness. The hand is also a force as well as the paw, but it is by no means all; without wings they cannot struggle up to the heights. We will believe with our heart, this is how we will be enthusiastic and full of longing; and we will conquer the world.

THE HIGH PRIEST'S PRAYER. I

"*These things Jesus spoke, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said . . . Now this is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*" (*John* xvii. 1.)

(*a*) We can get to know God from nature; but the real source of the knowledge of God is revelation. For in reality it is God who seeks us, He stands in our path; He stood in the historical paths of the great world and in the paths of grace, of inner experience, and we experience Him and justify the words of Pascal: "Ye would not seek Him, if ye had not found something of Him already." God speaks to us with the facts of world-history, like those of the crucified and risen Christ, "*signum in nationibus*," the sign of a miracle for the nations! If you wish to know God, follow the words of the Lord, says Jeremiah; watch the way of war: St. Paul, Peter, the Martyrs and Saints, and surrender yourselves to this unrivalled greatness so that it may raise you! *Acquiesce ergo ei.* (*Job* xxii. 21.) Yes, acquiesce . . . let us will, love, and glow with enthusiasm. *Will* the best, and pray that it may completely permeate us.

(*b*) If we pray, the visage of the Lord Jesus takes fire in our soul and floods its rays upon us. History pales before the greatness of Christ who appeared amongst us. It is a matter of history that when He appeared, a universal spiritual revival took place. Assyria and Babylon, the winged cherubs, bearded warriors, the battles of Antony and Pompey, the power of Rome and its culture became insignificant and it was His face the world longed to see and derive from it its consolation and its trust, "*cujus vultum desiderat universa terra.*" And now it is the same with us; we keep turning away from Him, and every time we return to Him, for we find nothing better. Let us take into our soul every trait of His with passionate love. "It is Thy face that great men wish to see," the aristocracy of the spiritual world. It is Thee we desire, O Lord, it is Thee we seek. Oh, come towards us and enlighten us. It is to Thee we turn, dear Jesus, and we trust that if we do not cover our eyes with some evil, sinful, ignoble attachment then Thy face, and Thy beauty will burn into us.

(*c*) Most men do not recognise or get to know God because they do not wish to turn away from evil, that is, to turn to God. But we wish to, we do indeed; at the price of complete devotion we achieve rejoicing faith and we will fight for the absolute truths of our faith and its infinite validity, for we believe that upon the ways of world-history we have come upon God in Christ. What He gives, what He has brought, is all eternal claim and eternal validity! His blood was Jewish, His spirit divine! We do not look at His type of face, His robes, the customs of His life, those were Jewish and Galilean, changing elements of culture; but we look at the elements of self-valuation, those of the love of God and redemption, those of grace and the union with God, in a word the elements of the Son of God which have their eternal validity, and "we will be His people." (*Jeremiah.*) And we are reassured in Him for we feel that our soul has deeply changed whilst around us death tempts and haunts us.

(*d*) *God speaks to us in our inner experiences.* Before, we spoke of the transfiguration of the soul. This is an immense fact, it is also a sign of miracle, *signum*, but in the inner world. God speaks to us if we approach Him magnanimously and if at the cost of every possible sacrifice, and with the Ten Commandments in our mind, we dare to ask Him: Lord, what is it Thou wishest me to do? I seek Thy will and not my comfort; Thy will, my Lord, Thy will at any price! Our life-history is also full of divine counsel, facts, and influences. Firstly the Lord comes to us by way of the purifying of the soul, He stretches His arm out and encourages us: Step out, do not be afraid that thou wilt go under; I am thy Lord God thy helper. Step out and fear not that thou canst not live without sin. Those who trust in My grace will here have their first success.

(*e*) And we obey His words and take His hand, we make use of His strength and experience so that we conquer the world, we do not sink, do not go under; we live purely. This is our experience, our divine experience! But we are not content with avoiding sin, we endeavour to achieve Christ-like life and graft His ideas and promptings on to us and we feel the joy of our soul in being able to share the feelings of Christ concerning our fellow-men. This again is our experience, our divine experience! We see others' beggarliness of heart, and their fading joys, and we proceed and conquer; therefore we experience. We pray and become filled with God; that also means that we experience. We see the struggle and suffering of others, and rejoice in our peace of heart; that also is experience. We go step by step and upon every pleasure and enjoyment of ours it is written: "To be continued." Whereas the pleasures of the world are blind-alleys and the sources of their joys are dead streams. Oh, my victorious, divine experience! Moreover we have not become poorer in any way, and because of grace we have not lost nature. As a result of our psalm-singing the song of the lark sounds more beautifully in our ears.

(*f*) Nature and grace, God and the world, history and eternity, world-development and individual saintliness find their harmony in us. We had no need to subdue that instinct of life, that life which lives willingly and joyously but only that it may be placed at the service of eternal, spiritual life. We need not separate the natural from the supernatural. We need not darken the supernatural, nor over-value the natural. We feel that great peace reigns in our very deepest emotions and feelings which know no world-denial. We feel that we can place all the forces of nature into supernatural life and this work of ours encourages us and makes us happy. Souls, where else does so much inner experience support any conviction or duty? Where does so much strength and enthusiasm arise, so much joy and life? Experience how true the divine words are: If you listen to me, your peace will be as the deep stream and your virtue as the tide of the ocean.

THE HIGH PRIEST'S PRAYER. II

"*They are not of the world as I also am not of the world.*" (*John* xvii. 16.)

(*a*) What does the world offer? It deludes and does not allow us to come upon reality. It keeps us going with words, with phrases; it talks and trains us to feelings and emotions. It talks of devotion, faithfulness, honour. It talks and does not permit us to glance into the emptiness lying behind the words. It deludes, and by the time we are disillusioned we see that we have suffered disappointment. There is no content, no value in our made-up world. It has forced our opinions and feelings upon us, it has cheated us; it used a magnifying glass and kaleidoscope and kept showing what is empty, false, mean, and flat, and showed it to us in such a way that we thought it was great, beautiful, and magical. Souls, away with the distorting glasses! The Gospel says: Let thine eye be simple, that is, let it be a healthy, good, strong sense, let it see through deception, mirage, and *Fata Morgana.* See what life is and advance towards your goal—the goal of life eternal. See that the way which leads there is the love of God and fellow men, love in deeds and not in words. Love man for God, live and work for God, and love God in husband, wife, child, friend, and fellow man. Love concretely; love here and now, love to-day. To love is to do favours, to endure, to judge with good-will, to understand; to feel faithfully, nobly, chivalrously, and to behave thus both face-to-face as well as behind the backs of others..

(*b*) The world offers us magic drink; it hopes to conquer with the intoxication of pleasure. It captures us with sweet songs but it is a poison-mixer like Circe. It encourages the evil tendency in us by a wrong conception of sexual life and permeates art and intellectual life therewith. It renders imagination and feeling sickly. It idealises woman in the wrong way, only to excite our senses. This entire ideology is a theatrical, artificial, worthless creation which in the eyes of strong idealism, —natural because it is healthy and strong—appears ridiculous and silly. It is a bonfire which singes the wings of souls; if they do not shrivel to skeletons or are destroyed by the germs of rot. We need pure, strong emotions in everything, including our relations with the other sex. We have to discipline ourselves, not by prudery but strong self-denial. . . .

JESUS IN GETHSEMANI

"*Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani; and he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray . . . he began to grow sorrowful* *and to be sad. Then he saith to them : My soul is sorrowful even unto death."* (*Matt.* xxvi. 36.)

(*a*) Although wounds, nails, thorns, the cross, and blood are eloquent statements of pain, yet the depth of suffering, its fire and agony, are within the soul. Therefore the Lord Jesus also points to it, points to His sorrowful heart and soul ; we see the sorrowful heart encircled by suffering. This is the depth of the Passion of the Lord, the soul which is sorrowful even unto death ; the cross grew out of this and those who want to understand the suffering of Christ and have compassion for Him from the depth of their heart, are not to forget for a moment that the soul of Jesus is infinitely sorrowful. His strength left Him ; Christ the pillar of strength broke down. The barrier broke, and His soul was flooded with sorrow. Oh, how dear the 22nd chapter of St. Luke is to us ; it strews pearls before us, it describes the tears and prayers of Christ. Drops of blood gleam upon the face of the Lord, they stream down His robes and tremble upon the blades of April grass ; His soul is dark night. This inner mood accompanies the Lord along His entire suffering ; it weakens His nerves and feelings ; it weakens His strength, sinews, and the muscles of His arms. O Thou, our poor, dear, sorrowful Lord ! The dread of the death on the cross, the treachery of His disciple, the suffering of His Apostles and followers, the doom of His people, draw Him into the depths as mill-stones. "Depth covered Him, He went to the bottom as a stone." Oh, Thou our Jesus, Thou hast gone through all the sufferings of my life ; I will endure everything in such a way as it would have come to me across Thy heart ; in this way I will easily bear everything.

(*b*) Loathing and horror of sin, the world, and meanness, seized Him, and His soul grew faint from the contemplation of mud and blood. Sin weighs upon Him with horror; He feels its entire weight; His holiness, purity, and gentleness revolt against this load. "The Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father" is the sink of the world's sins! "Heart of Jesus, Holy Temple of God" in the flood of filth! "Heart of Jesus, atonement for our iniquities," in the eyes of this our God is heaped with the sins of the world, like a healthy youth cast amongst rats, centipedes, and parasites. His vital force changes to disgust and dread, fills him with deadly fear as they invade His body. Many of us grow faint and become the invalids of our sorrow, our life becomes joyless. Even the fiery-souled Prophet Elias who raised the dead and made fire to fall from heaven creeps below a shrub, and his tired soul whispers: Oh, my Lord, it is better for me to die than to live in this swamp. And behold below the olive trees in the garden of Gethsemani the Lord Jesus is also overcome with such loathing! "My soul is humiliated to the dust and my heart clings to the earth." (*Psalms.*) Every soul who loves God shares in Jesus' loathing, and the languishing of His soul. When our youths and maidens lose their virtue, when the Sacraments are defiled, and virtue mocked at, then we feel what Jesus felt, we feel the loathing and dejection. At such times it is good to unite with the suffering Jesus, to console Him, and derive strength from the unity of feeling.

"NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE"

"*And kneeling down he prayed, saying: Father, if thou* *wilt, remove this chalice from me: But yet not my will, but thine be done.*" (*Luke* xxii. 41.)

(*a*) The Lord Jesus who grieves in the garden kneels down from the weight of His sorrow so that He might ease His soul in God. Dark is His soul, "the image of eternal sorrow," for His sorrow is firstly caused by sin and eternal damnation. He sees sin in a dreadful vision, which crushes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world; He feels that sin falls upon Him and this load makes Him cry out. Oh, my sins are there also; if we could only wipe them out of Thy dreadful vision, if we could lift them off Thy suffering soul, my sweet Redeemer! He sees hell and the damned souls and He experienced the unutterable curse of their existence and all its horrors. His soul bent over the abyss of predestination like a storm-swept rock above the seething sorrow of the Redeemer! Do you comprehend at last why He is sorrowful even unto death? It is from His side that Judas strays—the desperate soul of the sinner on His left is dying by the side of His world-redeeming cross and by this time to-morrow he also will be swallowed up by the abyss, he also, as well as other millions! Oh, sin, cruel, ungodly, terrible power. It is He who pays for it! From the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord, hear my prayer and have mercy on me!

(*b*) Father—we hear in the still night—if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done. Remove this cup from me, this bitter cup, which Thy anger and justice have strained for Thy Son, the sorrowful cup of Good Friday's vigil. Remove it, for my nature has a horror of it, my young life is terrified, my heart is contracted and my soul cannot bear this hell-like agony. Father, Thou who hast said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; My Almighty Father, of whom I have born witness that Thou always hearest me, I beg Thee, if it is possible that Thy holy Will should prescribe another way for me, then I beg Thee to alter my situation! God leads through good and evil. Suffering has at least as great tasks as joy, therefore the most important is that in good and evil equally we should see the divine will of the assertion of the soul. It is Thy will, O Lord, we have to accomplish, Thy Holy Will in strife and suffering, joy, and illness! This we would never comprehend if the Saviour had not immortalised the evening of the Garden of Olives for us.

(*c*) "*And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.*" (*Luke* xxii. 43.)

The soul fights a battle against the flesh and senses. Around Him rocks and thorns, sleeping disciples; in the background above Jerusalem the storm-clouds bringing disaster. Jesus seized with the horror of death awakes all the forces of His feeling, striving zeal; His prayer, His longing, His clinging to God, His attachment and trust, glisten in bloody sweat; this is the cold, bloody dew of His spring-like soul. He does not wish to give way. There are many who give way; they say that they cannot bear it and do not possess God and become traitors, apostates, and sinners. Jesus bears it and He wants to bear it and embraces God in His prayers. He bleeds but does not yield! Jesus also agonises because of those weak, unresisting souls who give up strife so quickly; He shows them how to resist evil "*usque ad sanguinem*," unto bloodshed. And the blood of the sufferer drips; this blood is strength and life; it filters through the grass on to the roots of the olive tree; for the first time it pours on the sinful earth, to wash off its curse. It turns to oil, to the salve of martyrs. It flowers into blossoms, into lilies and roses, and begs for the mercy and grace of God, "it cries more than the blood of Abel." It is this Sufferer and Striving One we approach with holy humility, we also kneel down on this bloody, dewy lawn. Oh, the arena of Christ is our battlefield, His cause is our glory; we willingly shed our blood but cannot draw back!

THE AGONY OF JESUS

"*And he began to fear, and to be heavy.*" (*Mark* xiv. 33.)

(*a*) Jesus was afraid of death and the agony He foresaw, and His whole being was shaken by this vision. Now He felt that He had loved life into which His adorable soul so well accommodated itself. He clung to it with every fibre of His heart, not as if it was the superior good, but because it is a great, divine good. This is the life He developed in others; He lifted agony and suffering from them; He healed the sick. He did not long for death, the world's painful longing for annihilation never withered His beautiful soul; existence to Him is not a glowing agony. . . . Behold, now death bends over this beautiful, divine life! Jesus is afraid, He trembles and sweats blood. Behold the Man, the God-Man, who became similar to us in everything, so that He might help us in our agonies and fears. How natural it is that we should be sorry for Him, and deeply thank Him!

(*b*) *Thrice He goes to His disciples seeking consolation.* Jesus loved His disciples, He clung to them; this He specially feels and shows on this eve. He would have liked to remain amongst them; devoted sorrow opens His mouth already at the Last Supper: "Amen I say to you I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new in the kingdom of God." (*Mark* xiv. 25.) He gladly received the signs of attachment; the salve of Mary pleased Him, and He did not think the 300 denarii too much for it. This loving, friendly heart now seeks consolation. He seeks for a true friend, a loving heart to console Him and sweeten His bitter soul with faithfulness and friendship. Friendship is a great treasure; Jesus values it; let us also value and enjoy it and accomplish the duties of friendship with joy.

"WATCH AND PRAY"

"*And he saith unto Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me? Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 40, 41.)

(*a*) Man holds his ground only if the warm breath of God revives him. Therefore, amidst our temptations and difficulties we have to exert great spiritual force so as to rise out of transitoriness and decay. The upward glance by which the soul comes to the consciousness of its moral greatness as opposed to the brooding of the world —the fatigue with which the soul rises to the mounts of God and learns to value the grace of God, so that it would not give it up for anything; that warm breath which makes hearts melt even in the cold world, and that feeling which loves the invisible good and from this love hates sin and curbs evil inclination is called: Prayer. O sublime, bountiful, powerful work which raises worlds, bridges abysses, makes heroes of men who are chained to the clods of earth, be thou our lot and daily work! As long as we behave unfeelingly and passively we do not conquer; but our soul wishes to work, to stretch, to rise, so as to conquer the mire, overcome the animal, and transfigure man. We have to pray in such a way that our prayer should be moral exertion—that we should seriously and determinedly want to achieve the more beautiful, purer, stronger frame of mind. Those who pray in such a way feel the warm, creating breath of the mouth of God.

(*b*) This Jesus who struggles with His anguish returns to His disciples and finds them asleep. But His prayer does not render Him unfeeling; He does not lose His human, tender, lenient disposition; for He has felt that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. He gently reminds them to pray and keep watch, tells them to pray with Him. He, the great striver, encourages His sleepy brothers by His example and gentle words, and urges them on to accomplish the great duty of the soul. We learn two things, firstly that our zeal, absorption, and greater spiritual life should never show itself in an insulting, hard way towards our more sleepy brothers. Let us encourage seriously, and still more seriously give example, but do not let us be rough. The other lesson is sweet; we willingly pray with Jesus; if in His interest we struggle against sin and misery in our prayers then the knowledge that we do so with Jesus will be sweet to us. We should say our prayers in the spirit of this Maundy Thursday. Let us keep watch with Him for an hour!

THE LONELINESS OF JESUS

The loneliness of Christ.

(*a*) The sleepless, distressing night of the soul is loneliness and desolation. "*Solus*," alone, is a dreadful word. Even in the world we cannot be left to ourselves; the sweet and strong ties of the heart all bind us to others and if they tear, it hurts. But what of the soul which feels itself deserted in the depths of its existence and consciousness, amidst questions without answers, amidst longings without prospects? What will become of us in the desolation of our consciousness? What will happen if our soul becomes a crying word in the desert of hopelessness, in the senselessness of being without an outlook? Oh, this cry is the wailing of the sensitive souls amidst the millstones of stupid existence; it is a crying after the absolutely necessary rise and deliverance. A cry which protests against the mechanisation of consciousness. It is a protest which man nails to the door of an incomprehensible hell! No, no, God cannot forsake us; He can put us to the test but cannot forsake us, if we do not forsake Him. Jesus, seemingly Thy Father has forsaken Thee. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" This is one of the symptoms of Thy suffering! Thy soul cries after God; Thy heart yearns after His vanished presence and begs: Lord, Lord, take this cup from me!

(*b*) Let us behold the Lord, so that we may conquer our loneliness and desolation. St. Paul says: He was heard according to the measure of His reverence and homage. In this desolate loneliness Christ is absolute homage; not my will but thine be done. He adores this hard, superior will; He sees that in the world God works with night and sunshine, joy and bitterness upon the shaping of the soul; He sees that the perspectives of development are inconceivable, but therefore on every tiny figure form and reason gleam! He sees that human feeling and judgment are relative and in the grinding mill of mechanism not only grains of quartz but sensitive souls cry out. He knows that we have to cling to God in good and evil with humility and goodwill! that we have to beg and entreat Him to raise us up to Him, to open our heart to His warmth, and that we have to enter the lists with strife and answer the cry of darkness and depression with the hope of the rising soul. We have to answer the plaintive cry of the heart with the cry of trust! the darkened soul's painful cry with the entreating cry of the Psalmist's soul for the light of God. We have to answer the cry coming from the depths with the cry sounding from the heights. "*De profundis clamavi!*" to the cry coming out of the depths, the "*Verbum Dei in excelsis*," the divine word coming from the height is the answer. Then we will also be able to say: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done."

(*c*) In the darkest desolation we have also to embrace the Lord with goodwill. With goodwill that is strong, trusting, and an absolutely respectful will. What God wishes is what will be, and that is what I will also. Whatever that may be, we bow before it with absolute reverence. Sin we will not, and we not only urge this but see to it that we do not become colder towards the Lord if something does not happen as we asked for it. Oh, strong, warm, pliable, unbreakable will! Such a will is reared only by absorption in God and union with Him! Jesus pays homage to the Lord with goodwill, and behold an angel appears; perhaps one of those who sang at Christmas thirty-three years previously, who sang: Peace on earth to men of goodwill. It is this Man of Good Will that the angel consoles with the consolation of peace.

THE PASSION OF CHRIST

The Passion of Christ. We approach the holiest and most important happening in the world, the suffering of the Lord. We accompany Him humbly and sorrowfully and with deep compassion. Oh, let us penetrate His feelings and share them with Him!

(*a*) At the beginning there was the Word, the mental shaping of infinite life in itself. . . Then came the world . . . human history . . . and in human history came Christ. He walked here and lived a divine life and taught divine teaching and doctrine, accomplished divine deeds, but one event in His life specially was the *culmination of His destiny.* He walked about with the idea, carried its plan in His heart; He created it and under it He signed with His blood the words: *opus Christi!* This is His Passion. He taught, He said many sweet, strong words, but His soul, energy and fire were concentrated in these words: "*verbum crucis.*" He showed us many signs, accomplished many miracles, but there is chiefly one sign He put before our eyes and this is the "*signum* *crucis*." This is what He valued, this is what He loved, this is into which He placed His entire soul. Oh, Thou sweet, strong, sacrificial soul!

(*b*) And what is it He announces and preaches? (1) The infinite greatness of God before whom Christ is annihilated . . . in agony, shame, and death. The fact that God is great is announced by nature and transitoriness, by Tyre and Babylon; a silent power which grinds up all. Pharaohs become mummies, towns become ruins . . . and the Son of God becomes sacrifice. So great is the Lord that everyone bows to Him; the Son of God Himself bows in immeasurable agony. (2) He announces and preaches about the homage and atonement due to God, in the darkness that surrounds the cross at midday, like a church which is hung with black, Jesus adores the Lord, begs Him, and makes atonement "*cum clamore valido et lacrimis*." His entreating words are heard: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (3) He announces the necessity of redemption. Brothers, we need redemption; we cannot rise out of sin, trouble, and eternal death if God does not lift us out of it. Brain and culture have corrected and mended us; but have not broken the conquering evil, the unfortunate power of our sins. Let us believe in the conquering good, in the redemption of Christ. (4) He preaches and announces the love of God. He values our soul, loves us unto death; He even died for us. Suffering is the fiery glow of Jesus' soul. Here His love reached heaven, this is where His Passion attained its height. It is with this love that He comes to us and says: I will conquer thee. And He conquered us in fact; it is with His blood that He grafted heroism into Christianity. He educated Apostles and Martyrs and started the flood of deepest compassion. Let us ask ourselves: Has He conquered us? Oh, Jesus, we belong to Thee; do not doubt me. Arouse a great, deep intimacy and love in us for Thee and Thy cross. (5) He announces how deep hell is, in front of which the cross is placed by way of warning. Deeply shaken, we kneel before the holy danger-signal of our sinful life.

COMPASSION AND PITY

Compassion and pity.

(*a*) The most moving emotion of the suffering Jesus was His deep compassion for us. "Go and help them"; this was His mission and from this mission His soul was filled with heroic feelings. He walked the way of passionate, sacrificial longing. As He went the wind caught up His tears and sweat. His soul was aglow in the hour of great mercy. He was as merciful as the Good Samaritan who comes on rocky paths to help dying humanity. He was like the great Helper for whom the crippled man waited an immeasurable time. "If Thou wishest it, Thou canst save them." This divine charge vibrated in His soul. Otherwise they perish. No one else loves them with a love that brings them to salvation. Without Thee "their heart burns out, their soul perishes." This is whence the "*caritas patiens Christi*" took fire; it became compassionate.

(*b*) The suffering of Christ is to us also the school of compassionate love. "Dost thou love me?"—the Lord asks—"Oh, if thou dost love me, have pity on me." All God-loving souls have felt a deep compassion for the sufferings of Christ. The first is the Holy Virgin whose heart was pierced by a sword! Beside her St. John, St. Mary Magdalene! St. Paul understands that "we have to feel what Christ felt," we have to become compassionate souls. How he loves Him, how he makes atonement, how he offers himself up for Him! St. Peter, weeping bitterly; St. Francis of Assisi and the holy betrothed ones, are filled with pity for the suffering Jesus. This way of the love of God is the easiest and most natural one: to have pity on the sufferer. This is our natural feeling and passion. Jesus wishes us to pity Him; He suffers so that God-love should be the easiest love; so that there should be no heart which shrinks from this love. It is upon Thy cross, O Christ, that Thou teachest us to love, for Thou impellest us to pity.

(*c*) And this is what pleases Jesus. He complains of hardness of heart: "And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none." (*Psalms* lxviii. 21.) He asks for the pity which is sweet to Him: "Remember mine poverty and transgression, the worm-wood and the gall." (*Lament. of Jerem.* iii. 19.) Oh, if we could but answer: "I will be mindful and remember: and my soul shall languish within me." (iii. 20.) Christ says to Angela of Foligno: My Father shall bless thee because thou hadst pity for my pains. St. Francis asks what he is to reverence and love above all and three times he hears: "*Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi.*" Let us sometimes say and pray the way of the Cross. Let us kneel at all the fourteen stations separately. Let us meditate there about the scenes of these stations and let us awaken the appropriate feelings. We win much blessing in this way, which we can offer for the dead also.

BETRAYAL AND KISS OF JUDAS

"*Rise, let us go: behold he is at hand that will betray me.*" (*Matt.* xxvi. 46.)

(*a*) Jesus was afraid and sorrowful and He looked for consolation to His disciples, He showed Himself in His weakness, but He prayed and conquered. His human nature shrank back; it cried to Him to spare Himself; but He questioned God, and God showed Him the way, the way of devotion and sacrifice, on to which Jesus stepped with determination. He stood the test of the greatest temptation of His life; He bowed His head into the hands of His Father and the Father reassured and encouraged Him. Jesus has a double Easter victory; in one of them He conquered death; in the other He conquered flesh and blood, and raised the victorious soul above life, the world, and death. Let us look into the soul of Jesus and into its sublime, wonderful development in Gethsemani. This is what we also have to experience; we have to raise our soul above temptations, difficulties, strifes; by it and through it we conquer everything. Oh, what a glorious Easter this is, the Easter of spiritual victories that man experiences!

(*b*) "*Behold he is at hand that will betray me.*" What a terrible approach; Jesus meets Judas. His pure, noble soul, which in its own bloody sweat rose above the low world and which did not give in to evil, faces the slave of loathsome instincts, stands opposite the ungrateful, traitorous disciple. God, what human ways, what human developments! What does love, knowledge, grace, and will develop in one, and what in another! Surely they developed in Judas into the caricature of the divine because he himself did not take God, Christ, the Gospel, the dangers of life, and the graces of God seriously. It is a great blessing if we take the soul seriously and establish the kingdom of God in it at all costs.

(*c*) "*And as He yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude . . . and forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail Rabbi. And he kissed him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come?*" (Matt. xxvi. 47.) Upon the divine, beautiful soul of Jesus is cast one of the darkest shadows of the Passion; God incarnate kissed by one given up to the devil; he faces Christ with the Judas-wages in his hand and the Judas-kiss upon his lips. This kiss is the most humiliating and most painful human touch; this He suffered from the disciple. The world triumphs; look at the sort of men His disciples are! My friend, is it possible that thou hast come for such purpose, that thou hast got so far, thou, my Apostle and friend and now my most burning disgrace? Jesus, our dear Jesus, we adore Thee with deep compassion! We comprehend Thee, we know which are the most burning wounds of Thy soul, which are the dark stains of Thy glory! Not from Thy enemies are these but from Thy followers, friends, priests! Our virtue is the honour and consolation of Christ; we will be jealous of it.

CHRIST A PRISONER

"*But they laid hands on him, and held him.*" (*Mark* xiv. 46.)

(*a*) Behold our bound prisoner. Jesus feels the shame: as if to fetch a sinner they came with swords and staffs to take me. Ye slaves of darkness and servants of meanness, ye bind the one who alone is free amongst you. Jesus, the slave of love, now became the prisoner of evil and hate, because of our sins; He was abused and chased out of the world. Oh, our poor, sorrowful, adorable prisoner! Judas sold Thee for the price of a slave, for it was written: Who kills his slave pays 30 shekels. For Thee they have already paid, therefore they can slay Thee. The fate of slaves is Thy fate; the law does not protect Thee, and barbaric heartlessness rages against Thee! How poor and desolate hast Thou become. . . . Jesus offers His captivity for us who languish in the captivity of sin. Following in His footsteps, St. Paulinus leaves his cathedral and the grave of St. Felix, denied his patrician blood, and became the slave of a barbarian in the place of a widow's son: Serapion enjoyed the pleasures of the capital's wanton inhabitants; then he sold himself and saved two souls; St. Vincent converted the renegade in his imprisonment. Christ is also bound, dragged, and suffers them to hurt Him so that He might loosen the bonds of our sins. We kiss Thy bonds, O Lord, and tear the bonds of our sins asunder.

(*b*) "*Then his disciples leaving him, all fled away. . . . And they brought Jesus to the high priest; and all the priests and the scribes and the ancients assembled together.*" (*Mark* xiv. 50.) This is another entry into Jerusalem. What a contrast between this one and the entry of Palm Sunday! How dark and dreary and how heavy this way is! The April night now also breathes the scent of olive and palm trees and that of the green foliage, but the human hearts are frozen to clods. The sublimity of Jesus does not call forth homage and reverence now, His sorrowful face is meetly veiled by the night; His love does not call forth return. Dreadful is man's turning away from grace to sin, from life to death, from warm love to unfeelingness, from loyalty to cowardly desertion! Oh, our dear Jesus, even if these unhappy possibilities hover before our minds we beg Thee help us to be faithful and persevere in the state of grace. Oh, Thou, who art the sufferer of our love, give us faithful love.

(*c*) "*The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world: I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple . . . and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them.*" (*John* xviii. 19.) Jesus stands bound before the council; poor prisoner, sublime soul. His speech is free, for His conscience is pure. His life is like the sunshine; here He stands with head erect and yet with humility. This is the highest dignity, this is kingly salve and the loveliest crown. Ask the men, He says—who has become meaner and baser through following me? Who has become more evil and more sinful from my doctrines? Have I infected or given life? Ask the world; not me the prisoner. There is naught with me "in secret"; my life is world-judgment; victorious world-judgment, which verifies and confirms me and my ways. O Jesus, Thou hast conquered the world. What is the rope, the soldier, and the council as opposed to Thee?

(*d*) "*And when he had said these things, one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow saying: Answerest thou the high priest so?*" (*John* xviii. 22.) This forceful word of liberty sounded offensive in the court of villains; the judgment-seat of hate and envy was shaken by it. The dignified idea of the free, divine Man created a storm in the assembly of malicious, servile souls, and the servant strikes the Lord. This is a terrible illustration of the humiliation of Jesus, and Jesus speaks, protests, but not offensively; and He forgives. Let us stand with our small and great offences and grudges before our shamed Jesus who is humiliated for us. Many are our grudges and great is our superciliousness. Let us be lenient and forbearing so as to be free. As the pebbles roll together, and are smoothed and polished in the bed of the stream, so may we be in the stream of life.

JESUS BEFORE CAIPHAS

"*For many bore false witness against him, and their evidences were not agreeing. . . . And the high priest rising up in the midst, asked Jesus saying: Answerest thou nothing to the things that are laid to thy charge by these men? But he held his peace.*" (*Mark* xiv. 56.)

(*a*) The spirit of Christ's suffering is expressed upon His holy face. Upon this moving sight the lips are dumb, the sorrowful eyes are gentle; His visage is sad and suffering; but this suffering also is diffused by superior beauty, and this beauty is patience. His dumb lips are an eloquent expression of His patience. Nothing expresses the sublimity of the soul so much as this dumbness into which the sufferer has sunk. This Man who was known to be "powerful in deeds and speech" now suffers the agony of calumny and hate without a word.

(*b*) Let us cast a glance at His gentle, sad face. We often endeavour not to betray our feelings; but how difficult it is with those which injustice, offence, and violence have awakened in our heart. Let us look at the holy face of Christ, at this adorable, solemn sight through which glows the suffering, patient soul. There is no such pale dawn of spring which is ever as pale as that sleepless visage was on the morning of Good Friday. He has even lost blood from the lashes of the whip; at the sight of the cross He revived a little as if the smile of prayer was forming on His lips. On the way of the cross extreme exhaustion is shown by the distorted expression of His face; lastly, upon the cross He sinks into the silence of deep adoration. Oh, my God, is this not more divine than the rising of the dead? What a victorious force is this suffering patience. Let us look into the face of this victorious suffering; we have to endure in such a way as not to break our soul; this is patience.

(*c*) "*Again the high priest asked him, and said to him: Art thou the Christ the Son of the blessed God? And Jesus said to him: I am. And you shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven.*" (*Mark* xiv. 61.) The man who was struck in the face said before the highest authority of the Jewish people that He is the Son of God. He warned His judge that He is the eternal Judge. He put forth all the strength and power of His soul that He might be master of the situation: High council, official representative of my people and my hopes, your ideas are immeasurably remote from those of God; terrible is this dark way of development upon which I go in the name of God, and yet I give testimony, as true as it is audacious, that I, I the shamed man, am the Son of God! It is a terrible declaration, an incredible vision; these are verily not human ideas and ways. But I am like this because I am the final victory of suffering love; this agony and sacrifice is divine which bound the Son of God with ropes, trod upon Him, and struck Him in the face. We adore Thee, sweet, divine Redeemer, Thou the touching and consoling revelation of love; we already comprehend Thee and look up to Thee with tearful eyes.Oh, thanks, thanks be to Thee!

(*d*) "*Then the high priest, rending his garments, saith: What need we any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What think you? Who all condemned him to be guilty of death.*" (*Mark* xiv. 63.) The heart of Jesus is pierced by deep, blessed pain; He knew what His end would be, but to hear face-to-face that He is guilty of death has shaken the lover of life, the tender-souled Jesus. His soul knelt in deep humbleness to the Lord of life and death and He offered Himself to Him. Behold I am coming, I come to die. I am guilty of death, for I carry the sins of the world. I deserve that Thou shouldst crush and break me. May the odour of my sacrifice go up to Thee and give Thee satisfaction. But we also kneel before Thee, we sink on our knees, Thou who acceptest the condemnation to death for us and instead of us; it is our sentence and Thou bearest it instead of us. Thou diest for me and I live for Thee! The bonds with which Thou bindest me to Thee are as strong as the power of death! Thanks be to Thee, Thou adored Lover of my soul!

PETER'S DENIAL. I

"*And Peter followed him afar off even into the court of the high priest; and he sat with the servants at the fire, and warmed himself . . . there cometh one of the maid-servants of the high priest . . . she saith: Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied . . . And again a maid-servant seeing him, began to say . . . This is one of them. But he denied again. And after a while they that stood by said again to Peter: Surely thou art one of them; for thou art also a Galilean. But he began to curse and to swear, saying: I know not this man of whom you speak.*" (*Mark* xiv. 54.)

(*a*) Peter loves the Lord but his love is impetuous and instinctive and it is not developed. His love is interwoven with many passionate, unconscious elements. He is able to draw a sword but he can also be timid and even cowardly and he is not conscious of this waywardness. He is nature and not yet individual. A good heart but unreliable. And he takes this wavering little flame into the torrent; what will become of it? It will be blown out. How strictly we have to take notice of ourselves, and to have mistrust for instinctive, unconscious nature; we have to pray, that is, to lead the divine grace into these depths, to discipline ourselves, that is, to divest the conscious guiding will of instinct!

(*b*) Peter stands amongst men who do not know Jesus, do not love Him; he is in surroundings where the noble feelings of His heart draw forth no echo; where it is cold, and fire does not warm the heart. Not one thread of nerve trembles there as do his; left to himself he becomes weak and loses himself. In such cold surroundings only deeply glowing hearts hold their ground, who are not impressed by human belief and worldly glance, who stand above the mob and who living from the deep roots of the soul hold their ground in cold and heat, wind and dryness. Oh, sublime frame of mind; Oh, intimacy and ardour impregnated with the traits of the ideal, its smile, tears, and love! Thou art rock, as well as root, and also flower. Thou art in the fullest sense of the word: Soul!

(*c*) And the longer Peter remains subject to his emotions the weaker he becomes—he gets estranged from himself and accommodates himself to the bitterly-strange milieu. He suffers under it but serves it. And his chief trouble is that his heart and consciousness remain dumb. Here the maids, servants, and the gossip of the street overpower him. In such circumstances he only sinks deeper. There is no rock bottom in the swamp, we have to rise and come out of it. In decay there is no balm; that is somewhere else, for that we have to seek elsewhere. It is extraordinarily important that we should rise out of the circumstances which deaden and benumb our moral feeling and do not permit our energy to assert itself. May be that we pray and meditate; but in a corrupt or airless and enervated milieu we await in vain for ardour. We are like the flowers in a bad soil; they live but do not give joy with their pallor. Let us therefore evade evil surroundings at least as much as we would a country with malaria.

PETER'S DENIAL. II

"*And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter going out wept bitterly.*" (*Luke* xxii. 61.)

(*a*) The Lord turns, and His glance, His strong soul, and accusing but merciful love pierces the soul of Peter. He looks upon Peter as the sun upon the March-snow and April-bud and He dissolves it and unfolds it sweetly. One glance, and what life! O Lord, look upon us with Thy sunny soul filled with heavenly energies . . . look upon us . . . conquer us . . . change us; let force, light, and warmth stream into this numbed life, into this moral depression. Let us not live as moles, we who look at the stars of God; let us not live like bats, we who are called to Thee to a flowering, forceful, spiritual world; light, O Lord, light and colour, beauty and joy. This is Thy life and Thy grace.

(*b*) "*And Peter remembered* . . ." This remembrance was not the mere functioning of the mind, but the awakening of the shaken inner man. . . . Oh, what surged along his soul; what shaming, repenting, sacred passions broke forth from his soul, from the depth of it! How the words echoed in him: Thou art Peter, upon this rock . . .! rock or rather mire, guide of souls or rather betrayer, traitor? Then again He heard the words: I prayed for thee that thy faith should not falter . . . Oh, my Jesus, how I made Thy prayers come to shame! Thou hast prayed but I have not prayed with Thee! And again he remembered having said: "If I have to die with Thee, even then will I not betray Thee". . . . Yes, I have said this and said many other things too, and I saw Thee perform miracles, I saw Thee on Mount Tabor in Thy glorious transfiguration, and yet, and yet I said that I do not know this man! It is impossible to describe how we used to "remember" on such occasions; it is better to weep here, to weep bitterly, and it is better to be afraid and go away where we can come to ourselves, and regain strength and even by our fall learn virtue and bravery.

(*c*) "*Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall* . . ." (*John* xviii. 28.) Whilst the admirable soul of Jesus pierced the soul of Peter and stirred up the healing waters of purification, the "bitter weeping," during that time the snake-like crowd goes on hissing. To them the glance of Jesus, His soul radiating even in its darkening, and His eloquent silence mean naught. The violence of sin renders souls insensible. To be so near Christ and yet so far from Him! The distance of souls is not measured by yards but by sympathy! Soul has to be approached with soul, goodwill, attention, sympathy.

THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

"*And the men that held him mocked him, and struck him. And they blindfolded him, and smote his face. And they asked him, saying: Prophesy, who is it that struck thee? And blaspheming many other things they said against him.*" (*Luke* xxii. 63.)

(*a*) They despised and shamed Him and gave free vent to their hate and loathing of the one condemned to death. Every blow was a stain, a stain of fire upon the soul of Jesus; every word of hate was a dagger; it burnt and killed. What did the Jews think of the Messias? That He was King and Lord. What of the homage which was due to Him? That the kings of Tharsis and the Isles should lick the ground before Him. And what is meted out to the defamed Christ, this King robed in sackcloth and ashes? The world is the house of Caiphas and in it Christ is now also the defamed Lord. We all behave like this towards Him when we sin; we defile Him with the dirt and loathsomeness of our passions. Our contempt and neglect are now also the glowing, burning shame of the Messias! Oh, my God, how we misjudge the Lord, how we stultify His wisdom. How wrongly we introduce the beauties of the Gospel into our life. Oh, "*mysterium crucis*," Oh, we crippled, unlucky sinners! As an atonement and compensation we will also repeat the words of St. Paul: "Every knee shall kneel. . . . Every tongue shall announce the glory of Jesus." Oh, St. Paul, with what rapture, enthusiasm, and victorious feelings hast thou written this! We comprehend thee, we understand. At the sight of Christ's Passion this longing rises into passion and these words grow to a tempest! We have to turn the course of the insane world! We have to lift up the glory of the defamed Christ.

(*b*) And they blindfolded Him and struck Him. . . . Mockery and cruelty surrounded Jesus on this sleepless Maundy Thursday night. Thou hast been called a Prophet, Thou dost not see through this dirty rag which covers Thine eyes; Thou art blind. We strike Thee. Prophesy who it is that struck Thee. . . . Those who sin do as if they did not care if the Lord sees them. Sin involves contempt; this is what was given to Jesus by the cruel night of disbelief. The believer has deep respect for the Lord who is present, the unbelieving and insolent behaves with effrontery. These are the blindfolded ones; their eyes are covered with a dark veil. We walk everywhere in the presence of God, for are we not such as "see"? Let the feeling of the presence of God sweep through us. This cleanses and fills us; then we dare to look into ourselves and we feel that our soul flowers and blossoms forth. There is no awakening like this one, no spring, or revival of sap and blood in nature.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

"*And Jesus stood before the governor . . .*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 11.)

(*a*) This is where the Lord officially meets the Roman power which for political motives adapted itself to every faith and did not take one seriously. This power jealously asks: Art thou the King of the Jews? The question was ill-suited to the poor tortured man. Jesus answers: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" that is, is this how those kings look who are thorns in thy flesh? "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence." (*John* xviii. 36.) Jesus condescends and teaches the heathen. What does this one know of that divine kingdom? He therefore explains to him: there is a kingdom which cannot be won by force; a kingdom which is mighty and sweet; an unrivalled kingdom in a sublime sense. It is beautiful and eternal. That is my kingdom! Our dear Jesus, we comprehend Thee, we whom Thou hast led into that kingdom and hast allowed us to experience its beauty and kingly and divine power. Oh, yes, this is the true, real kingdom.

(*b*) "*Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then?*" (*John* xviii. 37.) Then thou hast a kingdom? And in that kingdom dost thou reign? Thou art a poor, tattered man and yet a King? Yes, indeed, and what a King! King anointed with beauty, strength, soul, and joy! And thou makest kings of thy brothers. All of them are kings, and one does not push the other off his throne, and their kingdom is infinity. Hail, Thou, Our Lord and King who hast made kings of us also. Thou hast lifted us out of the unconscious crowd which serves sin, Thou hast kissed and anointed us . . . ! He does so with everyone who serves Him, for to serve Him means as much as to rule. We have to be purified, to become more perfect, to become divine . . . this is His and our kingdom! He became our brother to awaken the kingly consciousness in us and teach us kingly life. "What use would it be if thou wert king and knew it not?" (*Eckhardt.*) And of what use would it be if only our brother were king and we a wreck?

(*c*) "*For this was I born, and for this came I into the world: that I should give testimony to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice.*" (*John* xviii. 37.) A sublime and ungrateful mission! "Truth is the knowledge of God, the love of God, and the service of virtue; opposite this stands the world filled with the desire of the eyes, the desire of the flesh, and the pride of life"; this triple wish is the taint of man, and "truth" wishes to raise us out of it. If we would but be souls thirsting after light and truth! We hope to become such as we listen to the Lord's words and act upon following His words about being "of the truth." We also wish to go about this mission; though we know that upon this way the most beautiful soul was submerged in the shadows of the night of Gethsemani, and the kingly brow which God kissed with unique love in the Jordan and on Mount Tabor, became crowned with thorns. We burn and live for truth lest we feel the curse of scepticism which overcame Pilate, who after having asked disdainfully, "What is truth?" did not hear a word more from Jesus; "And he answered to him never a word; so that the governor wondered exceedingly." (*Matt.* xxvii. 14.) Speak my Lord, for thy servant heareth; hears it willingly, down on his knees and with a willing soul!

JESUS BEFORE HEROD

"*And Herod seeing Jesus was very glad for he was desirous of a long time to see him because he had heard many things of him: and he hoped to see some sign wrought by him. And he questioned him in many words. But he answered him nothing.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 8.)

(*a*) Again two men stand opposite each other, Jesus and Herod; heaven and earth, sunny May and dark midnight. Herod is a worldling; pretty women and power are his ideal and he would also like to see some miracle. Above such a one the ideas of God soar immeasurably high! Jesus keeps silent; He does not cast His pearls before swine! What an ominous silence, what a dreadful ignoring . . . ! Herod lived in adultery! Jesus sees the deep misery of this soul and also sees that the grace of His presence is ineffectual against this proud worldling. The suffering Jesus passes him without effect! Oh heart, oh God, oh reverence and disdain, who comprehends your ways? Therefore, we handle our soul jealously and with determined rigour and severity; we wish to keep it open to God; our heart shall be pure so that the Lord may graciously look upon us and speak to us! We have to be filled with reverence and beg on our knees that the Sublime One should speak to us! Oh, divine Majesty, do not turn away; let not Thy lips be dumb. Speak! We listen to Thee; it is our ardent desire to pay homage to Thee!

(*b*) "*And the chief priests and the scribes stood by earnestly accusing him. And Herod with his army set him at naught; and mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 10.) This silence embarrasses and disconcerts the worldling; it gives reason for deep forebodings but in the end impels him to helpless revenge. He despises the Lord and declares Him insane; in this way he is freed from His sublimity which commands homage. The low, mean man is pleased when he gets rid of all ideals and is able to declare the Prophets insane. It does him good if there is nothing that is great, beautiful, and sublime. This comes from the unloosed animal in man, the unrestrained senses. But the Lord also is strong; He despises disdain, curse and scorn which have no effect on Him. The servile retinue does not bend His kingly soul. He prays within Himself; He makes atonement to God for the lustful one who sits on the kingly seat, and begs grace for those who are misjudged and heroically disdain the judgment of the world and human points of view and who ignore the servile king and kingly servants in the consciousness of virtue. Lord, only Thy pleasure is our joy and strength. How easily we do without human favour when our heart is full of the consciousness of virtue. Oh, this is the real, true, kingly consciousness. Better to go barefoot as such a king than with a slavish soul to ride on royal steeds.

AGAIN BEFORE PILATE

"*And from henceforth Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.*" (*John* xix. 12.)

(*a*) The sad figure of Pilate represents the worldling, the cowardly, servile-minded character in this tragedy. He is unable to love truth rapturously; He cannot reverence magnanimously; therefore he is afraid; he bargains, betrays, and judges. Those who are afraid of the world shrivel into prisoners; those who are impressed with power and the world, as compared to the eternal King, the souls of those become darkened, and they become cringers. Oh, Lord, let us be kingly; let us have kingly, noble consciousness; let us first of all tend this and question ourselves concerning this in every affair of ours. Then we will be real men and honour, character, and homage will be our treasure. We wish to be lords over the world, paying homage only to Thee, King and Lord, who educatest kings and inspirest lordly souls. This standard, this salve, and this crown ought to be our aspiration. "*Soli Deo.*"

(*b*) " *And it was the parasceve of the pasch, about the sixth hour, and he saith to the Jews: Behold your King!*" The Lord Jesus has indeed a very sad, weak kingdom amongst us. His reign over us is unsteady and uncertain; a reed is His sceptre; joyless is His power; a crown of thorns is His crown, for weak and mean is His people. Let us strengthen His reign, let us render glory to His power. Let Him be Lord in our heart! "Behold your King!" What an unrivalled King! Other kings to evade death dress in disguise; Jesus on the contrary dresses in shame and wounds, He puts on the sublime disguise of His glory so that He should be able to go to His death for us. Oh, our unique, heroic King! How we have to love Thee and burn for Thee, how we have to reach Thy unrecognisable, kingly soul through shame and suffering so as to be able to capture Thy love and Thy beauty; to look into Thine eyes and to give up everything to Thee.

(*c*) " *But they cried out: Away with him: away with him . . . crucify him! Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered: We have no king, but Cæsar.*" The poor Jewish folk breaks with its Messias and passes on to its ways of misfortune. Behold the picture of sin; we do not want the kingly power of God which lifts us and strains us to His holy, divine Heart, and places us upon the throne of spiritual sublimity. This we do not want; but earth, mud, passion, and transitoriness is what we desire. Let us turn away from these dark abysses of the soul and let us loathe sin. Let us loathe its tyranny and yoke. Lord give us strength against our enemies! Strong hand and discipline, the fear of God, and liberty.

PILATE WASHES HIS HANDS

" *And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing : but that rather a tumult was made : taking water washed his hands before the people, saying : I am innocent of the blood of this just man : look you to it.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 24.)

(*a*) What is the use of words, when the will is weak and without character? This " good " will which declares Christ to be just and declares himself to be innocent is worthless. The good will is a strong will which fights difficulties and which even in the surging of passions does not swerve from the highest will. Pilate washes his hands. Even if this water had flowed in the shape of tears from his eyes it would not have helped him with such behaviour. The heart has to feel with deep emotion ; the lips to bear witness openly and boldly ; but even then the will has to act. Feeling, emotion, word, and will have to go hand-in-hand. Which of us is " Innocent of the blood of this just person ? " Not one. But how much we wish to give testimony and show our colours henceforth against the tumult, the mob, and passion ! We are not to wash in water but in the blood of Jesus, if we want to be innocent.

(*b*) " *And the whole people answering, said : His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*" The Jewish people passes on itself a terrible, inexorable sentence. It is a dreadful thing if blood clings to the soul of anyone. How much more so if it is the blood of the Son of God ! It clings to all of us but not in the same way ; it can cling as a curse, but it can also cling as strength ; it can be blood crying to God for grace ; it can be protecting blood against the murderous angel of anger ; it becomes a curse only if we persevere in evil and go thus into the other world. The word and curse of hell is the blood upon us of Him we hate. The word and blessing of heaven is His blood upon us whom we adore and love. Let Thy blood, O my Jesus, be a blessing upon us, a strength and force in us, let it be fire and fertility in our soul!

(*c*) "*Then he released to them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him unto them to be crucified.*" So this is the end of the great "good-will": to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus! Do we not feel loathing towards this good-will? But what a good-will is that of God and of Jesus: to release the sinner at the cost of so much sacrifice. In Barabbas we recognise ourselves who are rescued from damnation by the death of Christ. This is how Jesus wished it; in the judgment of Pilate, in this bad will He saw the infinite good-will of God and received it with humility. In suffering, misunderstanding, and trouble it is the will of God that we should virtuously stand our ground. The bad will of others, their injustice, and the way of nature should not darken our souls.

THE PATIENCE AND SILENCE OF JESUS

Not only weakness do we see in the Lord Jesus, but holy, silent force flows over Him and this is: patience. This is what sits upon His silent lips, on His gentle, suffering face and chiefly in the depth of His soul. Let us allow the beauties of this Passion flower to touch and stir us!

(*a*) The eloquent expression of the Lord's patience is His *silent lips*. This silence is loud, this dumbness cries out; Pilate is amazed at it. This "*vir potens sermone*" does not defend himself; although the glory of His Father, the justifying of Himself, and the checking of scandal would seem to demand it. But why should His lips speak when His whole guiltless personality bore audible witness for him? Why waste words on the raging storm, why raise His voice against the senseless violence? He let the flood surge above Him and bowed before it as does the flower of the meadow before the wind. Against violence the victory of the soul is patience, that is, sublimity which retires into itself.

(*b*) Patience resides upon His *sad and gentle countenance.* Kingly humility and saintly solemnity are its frame; suffering does not disfigure it; soul looks out of His eyes, not instinct and passion. But is passion sin? No, it is not; it is only sin if passion extinguishes the soul and surges through it. Patience is that heroic reaction which holds the helm even at the time of wild passions and instincts, and amidst the bitter streams of suffering. It is not able to abate the storm, but it keeps direction and proceeds towards its goal. That is why this face is beautiful although it suffers. It is like the angels of the cathedral's sanctuary who are sublime and sorrowful in their beauty!

(*c*) Let us enter His holy Heart and inquire into His feelings. An ocean rages there, it is bitter and billowy, but His soul pours the balm of oil upon the surging waves, and although that does not smooth the tide it hinders the waves from overflowing. The soul of Jesus is in darkness; even now He has power over darkness, but He does not make use of it, for He knows that by the act of God this is the hour of evil ones. His conscience is a light; it is with this that He stands in the darkness and awaits the sunrise. It is with the light of our soul that we also wait in the night of malice. Even if we cannot clear it into day, in our patience we radiate the light of our soul and by this we feel and make others feel that our soul is sunny and that light, glow, and warmth are ours. At night a little flame must suffice us; in trouble the "*lucerna lucens*" suffices, the soul which gives light. Therefore patience is the light of the soul in the night of suffering!

THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

The Passion of the Lord Jesus has to have a prelude without which the pitiable figure of the crucified Christ is colourless. The Lord's destruction has two dreadful, bloody steps; it is upon these that we have to go to Him.

(*a*) The first of these steps is His Baptism of blood; in scourging Him they have baptised Him to be the "spouse of blood." This is the punishment of servants. The slaves were whipped because they were "beast-like." "Pilate took Jesus and had Him scourged." The old law forbids more than forty stripes: The wicked man is to be beaten according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed, lest if he should exceed and beat him above these with many stripes, then his brother should seem vile unto him. (*Deut.* xxv.) The Lord Jesus was verily beaten and seemed vile: only so was He permitted to hang on the cross. Holy cross, thou wert the tree of shame until Jesus hung upon thee, covered with wounds and blood! From head to foot there was no spot untouched in this trembling, feverish, writhing body! Dreadful sight. Who see it, fall to earth, "*et infremit spiritu*," a storm of terror and pain convulses their soul!

(*b*) Sin raged over His body and agony penetrated it, so that that nature which we also wear should be purified by the fire of pain, and that through the merit of His suffering a pure generation should arise. The heart of Jesus is heavy for the sensual world! This " vilely beaten " slave who is tied to a post wishes to relieve His brothers from the degrading servitude of sensuality. With the cold terror of His agonies He wishes to guard them from the scorching breath of the desert wind, which burns into the marrow from the "*spiritus fornicationis*." Every one of His muscles trembles, every limb bleeds so as to draw out of us the passions of impurity and to cool the fire of forbidden longings with the dread of terror. We watch and look and our soul turns to stone when we conceive how the Lord hates the sins of the flesh.

(*c*) His blood gushes forth and is spilled. Behold a new garden of the pleasure and joy of God upon earth; the holy blood of Jesus sprinkles it. Just as the old "*paradisus*" was not watered by rain nor by dew but by warm upspringing dewy breath coming from the earth: so the garden of virtue, purity, and virginity is fertilised by this fountain, by the warm, dewy breath of Jesus' blood. Oh, let us come nearer so that it may fall upon our soul! Next to Him the Holy Virgin stands, there the pure souls, the struggling souls stand and those upon whom a drop of this sweet, precious blood falls, blossom forth. Oh, let us approach Him. Now He opens His heart, and pours His grace upon us from innumerable wounds! Our dear Lord is like the myrrh tree whose bark is cut in hundreds of places and the balm drips from it; those who inhale it will live. Oh, draw us to Thee! Blood of Christ, intoxicate us!

THE CROWNING WITH THORNS

Christ's crowning with thorns is the second step into the depth of His humiliation. "*And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him. And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 28.)

(*a*) Poor slave who dreamt about kingship. Spartacus also dreamt about it; he wanted to gain liberty for 100,000 of his brothers; he forgot that he was a slave and suffered for it. Poor servant who wants to be king! Behold One here also who said that He was King; they therefore brought Him His crown, robe, and sceptre . . . and paid homage to Him! Oh, Thou trampled, down-trodden King, who sitteth above angels and art arrayed in sunshine, I adore Thee in Thy terrible transfiguration and say: Yet Thou art King, King of my heart—King who hast humiliated Thyself so as to raise me—King who hast not spared blood and sacrifice so as to deliver Thy brothers—to take off their head the wreath of shame and to be able to give them "the crown of life"! Dear Jesus, my liberty was dearly bought by Thy humiliated, thorn-crowned head. It cost Thee much to be able to say to me: "My son, lift up thy head, be not ashamed."

(*b*) This crown of thorns represents the curse of sin of which the thorn is the flower! The unbeliever hands Christ the crown of thorns, he who lifts the ray of light from the Lord's head and does not recognise Him as His Lord and God. The haughty one hands a crown of thorns and says: I do not serve Him. A crown of thorns is given to the Lord by the voluptuous worldling who chokes with thorns the seed of the words of God. A crown of thorns does the impure one hand to the Lord while he crowns himself with roses and gives the thorns to his Redeemer. A crown of thorns does the reckless one give who offers the best of his life to the world and gives his drying bones to Christ. My dear Jesus, heavy is this crown for Thee; we are glad if instead of thorns we bind Thee a wreath of the flowers of our unpretentious but faithful life! This is more beautiful than the crown of Solomon. Thou hast said so—receive it therefore gladly!

(*c*) With this crown of thorns upon His head and this reed in His hand Jesus has deeply humiliated Himself before "the immortal King of time" for He feels that the sin of the world is upon Him, and consequently suffers all the shame. Those who have sin upon them shall bear every disdain. We also have done much that the world does not know; if it knew it, it would deservedly despise us. Many things lie hidden in us which do us no honour. We join our shamed Jesus and unite with Him; we give Him thanks that He bears His humiliation for us, and especially we unite ourselves with Him if undeserved humiliation comes to us! Oh, what a communion! How many thorn-crowned souls are united with the Lord! They were of the best and yet the world despised them. They were filled with great ideas and noble endeavours. They were treated as Our Lord was treated by Caiphas, Herod and Pilate! It is with you we go, thorn-crowned souls, we go with you in the tracks of Jesus! And if our head is sometimes heavy we bow it into the hands of Jesus. We take away the reed from those dear hands and place our head there. Jesus, dear Jesus, Thine is my head, my heart, and my will. . . .

"ECCE HOMO"

("*Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns, and the purple garment.*) *And he saith to them: Behold the man.*" (*John* xix. 5.)

(*a*) Pilate leads the scourged and thorn-crowned Jesus before the people, and everyone can see God's most loving and fiery revelation. Here also there is briar-bush and there are thorns, there are fire and fiery blood, there is glowing love, there is Holy Land wet with the blood of Jesus and the words of revelation are heard: *Ecce homo!* Behold how He has humiliated Himself, He became man, a suffering, tormented man! Let us look into His face. Let our feet be rooted to the ground; we cannot move or we would step upon His blood. Let us look up to Him with the strong emotions of adoration, terror, and love in return for His love. This face burns into our soul; this suffering and love pierce our heart. Oh, Lord, our dear Lord, Oh that Thou hast come to us just this way, looked upon us with this self-forgetfulness of love, Thou sweet, sublime, adorable Man! How Thou dost spread open the world of Thy compassionate heart, Thou sweet Samaritan! Oh, my Lord, great is Thy merit. Thy face is the symbol of the grace and strength of God! Nothing can withstand it! Everyone can win whatever grace he likes. What was thorn can become flower; that which was a rag can be a kingly robe; what was a wound can become pure beauty by the hand of Christ.

(*b*) "*Ecce homo*"—says Pilate. Behold the poor, tormented man. Do not hurt Him, have mercy upon Him! He is a good man, He loved, did good, helped; love Him in return or at least pity Him. "*Ecce homo*"—says our heavenly Father. Behold Him whom I have sent you that He should help you in the great Bethesda of this world. Ye have a helper, He does not spare Himself! From this ye see how much I love you; I have devolved your sins upon Him; I have not spared Him. "*Ecce homo*"—says the Holy Ghost. Behold my masterpiece; but it is He that has carved out upon Himself the base, miserable power of sin. The sinful soul is inwardly also sorrow, agony, wounds, and fever; and outwardly it is a wreath. Worldly pleasures and joys are outwardly kingly robes which moths devour, and below which feverish, wounded life withers. O Holy Ghost, "*digitus paternæ dexteræ*," Thou the excelling hand of the Creator, in this symbol in the "*Ecce Homo*" Thou hast shown us to what degradation man has sunk! We repent and loathe sin. That is why Thou hast presented Him to us. And it is for this reason that we also beg Thee, O our Lord God, to look into the face of Thy Christ and be merciful to us.

(*c*) "*Ecce homo*" . . . behold the perfect man! It is in the frame of suffering that we here view the unrivalled greatness and beauty of the soul. What a sight, which the Way of the Cross and Passion were unable to dull;

on the contrary, they covered it with fresh, glowing light. As we view this picture so we adore and copy it, and how fortunate we are to be able to do so. Each art becomes fertile from this vision, every soul becomes warm with inspiration, and creates and moulds itself on this pattern. Only He is the unique masterpiece; evangelists and fishermen of Galilee have not conceived Him, Fra Angelico and Michelangelo have not created Him. The ideal picture of ethical beauty and greatness was created by God. In His Son He introduced the man who is filled with grace and truth, filled with supernatural truth, as an actual, historical reality.

THE TWOFOLD PLEBISCITE

The twofold plebiscite. (*a*) The deluded, incited people have made their lowly, superficial, dark souls felt on two occasions in all their cruelty towards the divine Redeemer. In two plebiscites they showed that they could be ungrateful and cruel. Firstly: " Now he was wont to release unto them on the festival day one of the prisoners, whomsoever they demanded. And there was one called Barabbas who was put in prison with some seditious men, who in one sedition had committed murder." (*Mark* xv. 6.) This is the one who was ranged alongside Jesus, and the people took their choice. The dirty flood of the street swept away Christ the pearl, and lifted out the scum. It denied its own emotions, the triumph of Palm Sunday, and the remembrance of good deeds, and chose Barabbas, the barbarous, dreaded, robber-chief; who was not able to love, to heal the sick, to give sweet sunshine to the blind and balm and peace to those that suffer; who did not carry heaven in him and still less lead others there. Oh, humanity, oh, my soul, how foolish is your choice ! How often does it confront God with some kind of inclination or passion, soul with flesh, heaven with foul world, conscience with cowardly submission, our sublime, spiritual world with miserable human points of view, and we make our choice . . . more cannot be said, for brain and logics have no more words here ; we kill ourselves ! For whom has the Jewish people chosen liberty ? Who deserved life, according to them ? With whom did it wish to share air, bread, and sunshine ? To whom did it want to give joy ? From whom did it expect blessings for itself and its children ? We deeply adore Thee, humiliated Lord Jesus ; we see that that crown of thorns which wreaths Thy brow truly wounds Thy heart and we comprehend Thee ! But what are we to say when we ourselves have also been so wicked and mad as to forget Thee for the world, the flesh, and passion ?

(*b*) The second plebiscite is the scene of the "*Ecce homo*." The thorn-crowned, bleeding figure of Jesus appears and the air is pierced and rings with the screams and yells of : "Crucify him, crucify him." We no longer look at the mob but we look at the cruel ravaging which the explosion of this hate has caused in the soul of our Christ, of the Holy Virgin, and His followers. As the dynamite tears muscles, fibres, nerves, organs, and tears man into rags ; so the explosion of this hate tore the soul of Jesus to pieces and the heart of those who love him. What a terrible cry ! What a dreadful curse upon the head of Christ ! We become dumb and crouch at the feet of our dear Jesus ! O divine Redeemer of ours, this is Thy reward. This is how they pay Thee back ! It is this bitterness Thou offerest to the Lord, Thou great humiliated One, Thou sweet exiled One! Thou must go to Thy death, for they reject Thee, and condemn Thee. This is Thy way, it is upon this way that Thou seekest life, grace, and consolation for us and makest us loathe hatred, the hurting of God, and cruelty.

THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR THE CROSS

"*And after they had mocked him, they took off the cloak from him, and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 31.)

Jesus goes to Calvary in His own robes, that everyone should recognise Him; He completely empties the cup of shame. It is in these robes which His dear mother has woven and sewn that He embraces the cross. How deeply touching is the first glance which Jesus casts upon the cross, when He sees what He so sought, and so loved, and what He knows is given Him by the hands of God.

(*a*) Jesus sought the cross; He walked with this thought and this was what was engraved on His heart, so that He could not forget it. The Holy Scripture allows us to glance into the soul of Jesus of which the cross is the reigning idea. When Peter avows that the Lord is the Son of God, the Scripture adds: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and be put to death." (*Matt.* xvi. 21.) And again: "And Jesus took the twelve disciples apart and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the son of man shall be betrayed . . ." (*Matt.* xx. 17.) And on Mount Tabor at His Transfiguration He also spoke about this. Thoughts of the cross never left His mind. Even the salve of Mary brought to Him a breath of Golgotha; He took the salve for His burial-anointment. O God, our love, Thy crucifixion was thy thought, Thy cross was Thy crest and banner . . . and all for me! If thou dost not forget, how should we forget? Oh, sweet soul, how we treasure Thee!

(*b*) Jesus saw the cross, kissed and strained the holy wood to His heart, for as the will and grace of God He took and received it from His hand. He sees the hideous, malignant, cowardly people; He sees the hands of gaolers and hangmen; He hears the betrayal of the disciple, the denouncing of false witnesses, the mockery and curses; He keeps vigil during a cruel night; He colours the morning of Good Friday red with His scourging; exhausted He lies upon the cross and tastes gall and vinegar; but all this He does and bears with such a soul and spirit knowing that God sends the cross to Him. God—not Judas, not Pilate, and not the Jews. They are but instruments. He sees the plans of God and adores them. This is what we have to see, only so will we succeed in living and suffering.

(*c*) He loved the cross, embraced it, and carried it; He sprinkled it with His blood, adorned it with the five roses of His wounds; He overwhelmed it with the scent of His heroic soul; in His eyes the cross is the tree of life, the key of heaven; it is a throne and kingly sceptre; a sword and ploughshare. He taught from this cross; here He summed up His Gospel and the eight beatitudes. Here he brought forth the source of His grace; by His bitterness and suffering He created eternal bliss. His cross was turned away from Jerusalem, it looked towards us. He viewed the real eternal city, here upon earth the Mother Church; beyond, Heaven. These two cities He loved! Oh, dear Jesus, we love Thee and Thy cross and kingdom; it is this love we kindle in the Holy Mass in our rosary of Passion, in our devotion of the Way of the Cross, in our prayers and fasting!

JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS

They lead Jesus out. "*And bearing his own cross he went forth to that place which is called Calvary.*" (*John.* xix. 17.)

(*a*) Jesus goes this way with a crown of thorns upon His head, with the cross on His shoulder, the way we call the Way of the Cross. He strewed this way with His tears and blood; it is upon this way that redemption, faith, pity, and love went. It is upon this way that Christianity went on its knees; flowers grew forth from every tear and drop of Jesus' blood. For nearly two millennia His followers have paused at fourteen different spots to reflect on what the Lord has done and suffered for them! We must meditate especially on these points: (1) This is a bitter, sorrowful way. Jesus goes out of Jerusalem, out of the heart of the people; curse and dread surround Him. Where are those He healed, to whom He gave sweet sunshine and joy, where are those who sang: Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord? (2) It is a hard way, a heavy one. Heavy is His heart . . . it pains Him, it is its burial. Heavy is the cross. Behold the Lamb of God who carries and takes away the sins of the world. (3) It is an exhausting way. His feet are bleeding; the cross reels; it keeps hitting against His thorn-crowned head; He goes over the hard stones deeply bent, amongst hard people who are not afraid to bruise the Saviour and place two scoundrels beside Him. We go after Him with deep compassion and deeply shamed: it is for us He goes to death! How can we bear it?

(*b*) Yet in the eyes of Jesus this way is a "kingly way." True that it is the way of sacrifice but at the same time it is the way of deliverance. In His soul, He sees the ways of ruin, sees the dark mysteries of predestination and magnanimously goes to redeem man. This tormented man goes with the passion of devotion, eager to complete His sacrifice. He has to occupy the fortress of God, to break down the walls of human prejudice and and instinct; He has to plant the banner of the cross upon the battlements of the world, that is why He struggles on towards the goal, even though He totters and falls. Oh, our dear Jesus, exhausted in shame, agony, and weakness, what has my freedom cost Thee! How Thou hast striven and struggled, because Thou hast loved! We wish to struggle and sacrifice ourselves for Thee and if necessary we wish to bleed for Thee . . . we wish to persevere with Thee "*usque ad sanguinem.*"

(*c*) "*And going out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon: him they forced to take up his cross.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 32.) The Lord's way is a typical way, it is the way of bearing the cross. Everyone bears a cross, carries a cross, but few walk the kingly Way of the Cross which the emotions of Jesus have hallowed. The two thieves also walk the way of the cross, the wild mob also treads it, but they do not walk upon it in the spirit of penitence; they carry a cross on the pagan ways of the world. Simon of Cyrene carries the cross at first only by constraint but he then resigns himself to it and walks the way with compassion and love for the suffering Jesus. Most of us do likewise. By nature we have a horror of the cross; but events force us to it. Oh, let us carry the cross of Jesus, that is, let us carry our own cross with the emotions of Jesus; let us carry it for our sins, let us carry it for others imitating Christ. Then carrying our cross amidst the wild, profane mob as well as amidst unbelievers and embittered desperate ones we will go upon Christ's kingly Way of the Cross.

JESUS THE KING OF PENITENCE

The king of penitence appears and passes along the way of the cross in purple state, with a crown upon His brow and sceptre in His hand, with His escort. Those who understand this begin to weep—those who start to follow in His traces cannot weep their soul clean enough.

(*a*) Clothed in humility and suffering Jesus atones for our sins, my sin. For he who is touched by the grace of penitence finds that the exciting scenes of the Passion and its figures disperse, the noise subsides, the surroundings of Jerusalem become a desert, the cross of the two thieves disappear, and the soul is left alone with Jesus. I kneel in front of His cross, I hear the dripping of His blood; all His agony falls on my soul. He opens His lips and asks: Man, what hast thou done? And my consciousness answers and cries out to the whole world: I have sinned! I cannot share my sins with anyone, for them I cannot offer the tears of others; for I stand here as if I were all alone in the whole world, as if I had no mother, father, and friend! No one else can do penance for my sins—I alone.

(*b*) The emotion of penance is more fiery and deeper than the consciousness of having sinned. Jesus, after having questioned me, takes my sins upon Himself; and I ask aghast: What dost Thou wish, my Lord? Whither dost Thou go? He answers: " To crucifixion." I was the sinner, but the Lord Jesus did penance for me and died for *me*. He died for me. Do not let us say that He died for many. Every flower upon earth can say: The sun shines for me in the heavens. I live from it and through it. So the Lord Jesus suffers for me; it is for me that His soul glows blood-red. And the Saints say: He died for me, for me. This is what the Holy Virgin says in her own way. This is what we also say: He suffers for me, for me; He loves me so that He died for me. Oh, my God, is there a more fathomless truth than this: The Lord died for me?

(*c*) Our love turns to violent, passionate contrition and grief if we think where we would be without Him. We were born in sin and if we speak of a right then we have not the slightest right to grace! The redeeming love of Jesus lifts us out of the abyss and hell. If the Lord has not mercy on us " We should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." (*Isaiah* i. 9.) That is why sinners and saints clasp the cross. No, not saints; here there are no saints; under the cross even the glorious saints are but rescued souls. It is by His grace that they became saints, that they became penitent, that they became loving! Under the cross they also are seized with the feeling of their unworthiness; they also dress in sack-cloth; they do penance and weep! We all of us are souls whom the grace of the Crucified One bowed down and lifted up.

THE DUTY OF PENITENCE

With what humility and suffering the Lord Jesus goes upon the Way of the Cross, upon the way of penitence! It is with such self-denial of body and soul that we also have to atone for our sins.

(*a*) We have to; the sinful soul has no other robe with which to cover its nakedness than penance. Penitence is a spiritual, inner emotion, but it must have an outer manifestation and that is suffering. Christ showed it and Christ-like souls have all understood it this way. We know two means for making amends: here on earth the blood of Jesus; and in the other world, fire. Blood which drips from smarting wounds, which is shed through lashing, and which starts forth from cruel thorns . . . and fire, that sword of flame, that flame-arrow, and tongue of flame which penetrates into the soul and takes from it the atonement for sin. Do not let us wonder that cruel suffering is our atonement; this is necessary so that it should lift out the deeply hidden evil. "False is the heart above all"; it hides its intentions and misjudges its actions; it flatters itself and is deceitful. Unsparing hands are wanted; as well as agony and fatigue so that we should disillusion it. We have to extricate ourselves from apparent disappointments! Let us look upon the solemn, suffering face of Christ.

(*b*) But we wish for more when we want to suffer with Jesus. Not only the holy claims of our sinful heart force us to the way of penance but also our love for Jesus.

No, no we cannot keep away from Him. We wish to follow in His tracks; can we live then without penance which atones? Would not the painful face of Jesus burn into us and could we bear comparison with Him? No, O Lord, we also go to beg grace; that is why we clothe ourselves with Thee. We clothe our soul in shining glorious grace and our body in self-denial; let it be true of us also: "His robes are washed in wine and His clothing in the blood of the vine."

(*c*) It is especially in Holy Communion that we feel that, living in a world saturated with sin, we have to help others and to prepare the way to God for them also! Behold, heaven is locked; few are the "men of God," and His words are "precious and rare." Blindness covers the eyes, and hearts weaken. With the secret energy of His Holy Cross, with that of His suffering love and sacrifice He raised souls up from death. Let us comprehend Him and follow His example. He for us and we for others. In expiating for others we ourselves make speedy progress in virtue!

THE AGONY AND ENERGY OF SUFFERING

Why is there so much agony, so much passion, energy, and force placed in the cross?

(*a*) Christ wished our hearts to catch fire from His fever; that our passion should awake from His passionate love. He wished to wed our soul in blood. Therefore, He wished passion and love in return from us, an ardent, emotional attachment, and self-forgetting devotion. In order to achieve this He shows us His soul on the last eve and night in the sensitiveness of farewell and in the sadness of loneliness and death. Christ lived for us; He loved to be loved; Bethany was His dearest domicile. On Palm Sunday He entered and wept over the city of Jerusalem; at the last meal His heart clung separately to each one and He had to tear it away, one by one; in the Garden of Olives He searched for good, consoling souls. Let us go to Him; in the Holy Eucharist the remembrance and atmosphere of the Last Supper is immortalised. Let us have pity on Him and love Him with sympathising love.

(*b*) Then Jesus entered on the cruel labour, the cruel night of Thursday to Friday. He began with the sleepless night of mockery, His last night on earth. What a difference between Christmas night and this one. What a difference between the love, kiss, and adoration of the dear mother and the roughness of the executioners; between the angels' song and the brutal curse. And yet it is a Holy Night upon which the dawn of eternal spring, the Good Friday of blood breaks; when it is April, that is "opening" the veins of His holy flesh, the gates of heaven and the lock of the curse that imprisoned souls, was opened. Upon the *via dolorosa* began the immeasurable procession of pitiful love and the long line of pierced souls who were able to weep and mourn. The first one is the Holy Virgin, the first pierced soul . . . then all those that loved Him.

(*c*) We suffer the Lord's suffering; the inspiration of compassion seizes us. We awake our pitiful love for His *adorable individuality*. This divine man loved, and loved in this way. Soul which soared and soared in such a way and then again alighted. Oh, how can we forget Thee, Father, friend, guardian-angel and redeemer of our soul! We have to put heart into our religiousness; it is through heart that there is faith, conviction, idealism, and force. Because of want of heart we have no sense for the ideas of Jesus, His emotions and commands, and as long as that is missing these are mere shadows. Therefore, we are not to doubt, not to fear, but to love with compassion, in return, with sacrifice and friendship. My heart, O my divine Saviour, is touched with compassion. This is what Thou wishest!

THE WEEPING DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

"*And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me but weep for yourselves, and for your children.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 27.)

(*a*) Among Jesus' circle of disciples the women are conspicuous; they tended the Master and shared their fortunes with him. Bethany is the Master's place of rest in the love of Mary and Martha. Magdalene chained to the Master with the grace of spiritual resurrection is the first favoured one also on the dawn of the Resurrection. Johanna, the wife of Chuza, represents high society. Several of them accompany the Master, they cling to His lips and soul. The daughters of Jerusalem weep for Him upon His Way of the Cross and at His crucifixion. The women are His only followers who view this dreadful happening from afar. How consoling all this is to the Master; but He who immensely loves those who love Him in return directs their attention to themselves, their soul, and bliss, as if He would say: Weep for me in such a way and with that love from which ye yourselves become more beautiful, more noble and perfect.

(*b*) "*For behold the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 29.) This is a terrible idea: to bear Judas; to bear executioners who crucify the Lord; to bear children who go to hell! To give life which becomes eternal agony! To many mothers the unbelief and immorality of their children are the bitterness of the Way of the Cross. Let them weep their sorrow at this scene of the Way of the Cross. Christ also wept over Judas. Then let them love the Lord, and go on loving Him and love Him more ardently; let them recognise their vocation which consists in the knowledge that where Apostles could not reach there they are to plant the Gospel, and where no kind of presbyter could carry the Holy Eucharist there the reverence and love of women lead it. Into the Roman Palatine women took and carried the Gospel and the *mysterium*; they became its heroes and imparters of its infinite bounties. Women are to proceed upon these tracks.

REMORSE AND ATONEMENT

"*For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*" (*Luke* xxiii. 31.)

Christ is the green tree; we are the dry one. Behold what the justice of God enacted upon Him! On us there are many sins; we fade and dry. We want to go in the tracks of Christ and to live in the emotions of penance and atonement. Jesus inspires three penances, three griefs:

(*a*) The first one consists of the motives of power and necessity and those of unpliable divine will. We have to serve the infinite Lord; the "*pondus æternitatis*," the thought of eternity bruises and crushes our soul. We serve His glory whether we love Him or hate Him; we roll the blocks of His pyramids whether we do it out of love or hatred; but if we hate we will be also unfortunate. O Lord, behold Thy servant; my soul becomes crushed between the mill-stones of Thy power and my sinfulness; this is the "*attritio*," the bruise! The song of Thy servant is the "*kyrie, eleison*" and Thou wilt not be cruel and deaf towards him.

(*b*) The second penance and grief is inspired by divine love and goodness. He is not only Lord but also Father; He does good, tolerates, and endures! We respond with readiness, love, and penance. The servant comes to realise that he is the dear child of God and this same dear son awakes to the fact that he is the prodigal child. The little lamb finds that it has gone astray, but then it finds itself upon the shoulders of the Good Shepherd. The visage of God changes, the traits of hard power are succeeded by the expression of gracious dignity, patriarchal love, and fatherly bounty. I am the son of the Father who consoles me, who embraces me, and anoints me with the chrysm of consolation. The feeling of the Apostle seizes our soul: Do not degenerate from the lofty thoughts of the sons of God. . . . We already grieve and repent like Thy dear children.

(*c*) The third grief and penance is inspired by "the King living in ashes," who has left all. He exchanged His crown for the wreath of thorns. He longed for me and came to seek me! He knocks at my door . . . He cries for me! The love of the Father changes to the passionate love of the betrothed. His passion is the "*excessus*," He loves unto death; He wants to die for me. His visage is aglow, then again becomes pale as death. His chest heaves, His heart is wounded by the memory of me. Oh, what a remembrance! What a bleeding wound! He does not forget me; "behold I have marked thee in my hand." And behold how infectious His love becomes! It is below the cross of the Lord that Peter learned to weep, Paul could not rest from the thought of His crown of thorns till his own head rolled in the dust; in the train of Magdalene, the gathering of loving souls, the brides of Christ take up their abode at the foot of the cross, in the rocky caves of Golgotha! Who will give tears to us also that we may weep for our dear Jesus and ourselves?

CHRIST REACHES GOLGOTHA

(*a*) Jesus passes up to Calvary suffering, breathlessly falling three times on His knees, this is how He passes before the eyes of the Jews who crowded to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. This is the way of the Lord. He came silently, came at night, and no one took notice of Him in Bethlehem, and the Angels sent a handful of poor shepherds to His crib; and now He identifies His own shame with the religious and national feast of the Jews. Then He came at midnight and hid in a cave; now He comes at midday and shows Himself on the summit of the hill! Oh, Jesus, how gloriously didst Thou annihilate Thyself! Thou didst not beg and require anything from the world! Thou treadest Thy ways alone, away from human ideas and thoughts! This is not weakness but strength; not servility but superiority. Humility and humiliation are only valuable if they come from strength and if strength executes them; humility is no passivity and no lifelessness!

(*b*) "*And they gave him wine to drink, mingled with gall. And when he had tasted, he would not drink.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 34.) Wine shall be a strengthening drink and not an intoxicating one or one which paralyses life. Do not let us mix gall into it! Jesus does not wish to drink of it for He does not want to bear His suffering with benumbed senses. He offers complete suffering for us! Oh, Thou noble, magnanimous Jesus! Let our disposition and frame of mind be pure wine. Let our faith be without worldly ideas, let our prayers be free from intentional distraction, and our intention without vanity. Oh, my Lord Jesus, I also have mixed gall with Thy wine; mingled sin and irresolution into Thy service. But chiefly in our intemperance have we given the Lord gall to drink. Precious, pure-gold souls are those who offer pure wine to Jesus; that He does not refuse.

(*c*) They unclothe Jesus who appears before the world deeply shamed in His bleeding nakedness. This nakedness which was transfigured by the spirit, could give offence to no one. Later they divide His clothes and cast lots for His cloak, as He will no more need them. What a cruel plundering of the poor sufferer! Jesus sees and hears this; His mother watches. . . . Oh, dear Jesus, may my nakedness of soul not hurt Thine eyes; I do not wish to be divested either of virtue or of grace or of piety. I will not squander my pearls, I will not cast lots for my kingly cloak. What is more, I will clothe myself with Thee. This is the wish of Thy Apostle; "Take Christ upon you," His virtue, His spirit. For the sake of the agonies of Thy nakedness I beg Thee to dress my soul with strength and beauty.

THE CRUCIFIXION

"*And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 33.)

(*a*) Jesus lies down upon the cross, upon His resting place and rack. The great sufferer lies down. Elsewhere, where they are able to love, everyone walks on tip-toe; they oil the door so that it should not creak; they remake the bed several times a day; they arrange the coverlet so that it should not hurt the smarting body; they watch for the breath, sigh, and movements of the invalid. The Lord Jesus lay on the hard beams: His body and soul was shivering, weakened, and feverish. . . . Oh, would that we could have been His Good Samaritans then! He had told His parable of the sufferer who received relief, and now what treatment does He receive? Instead of a bed the wood of shame, blows of hammers; instead of balm and bandages, vinegar and gall. Who runs to his aid, to place him gently in a litter and carry Him away? What did Christ deserve from us, and what did He receive?

(*b*) Jesus lay upon the cross with natural dread and terror. When He stretched Himself upon it He wished to cover the earth and throw Himself between God and man, between heaven and earth. When He spread out His arms He wanted to ward off the lightnings of God. When He placed His head upon His thorny pillow and looked up to the sky with His tear-stained, bloodshot eyes, then the silent whisper of mercy left His panting chest. Then His soul streamed forth like outpouring oil and also the prayer of adoration, atonement, entreaty, and supplication. And the earth became filled with the perfume of this prayer. This oil is balm to the heart of God and to the souls of sinners . . . these tears are the balm for our wounds . . . this wine mingled with gall becomes the wine of the Samaritan for the soul-wounds of the storm-driven wanderer crucified on His right hand. Oh, my Lord, what have I cost Thee and how hast Thou tended me! Now when we awake to the consciousness of Thy infinite love the heroic return of it is the only way open to us! Return of Thy love unto death!

(*c*) They nailed Him with three nails on to two balks. They nailed Him in His living flesh, and from His heart the prayer of deepest pain broke forth. From His hands and feet blood sprang forth. Once on the door of a barn I saw a kestrel nailed alive; poor audacious soarer, I said to myself; but here that kingly eagle is nailed which came down from the highest heaven to us to lift us up, and here on Calvary on the great heap of the skulls they nailed Him down and set Him up for the world to mock at! They nailed down His hands . . . nailed down His feet . . . they opened four wells for the new paradise of souls. The blood trickled down the wood of the cross; it passed through its cracks, and came down to earth: the first redeeming drop of blood! How the earth trembled from it! How the lightning of life flashed along it, but at the same time a great unconscious pain; the pain that the blood of God was needed for the taking away of our sins!

(*d*) Then they lifted the victim of their rage on the cursed wood, this holy and lacerated body, the agonising Jesus, the butt of curse and blasphemy. "Cursed is he who hangs upon the cross . . . " this is what resounded in the mob. Jesus spread out His dripping four wounds on to the senseless world; He radiated bleeding shafts from them so as to stigmatise hearts. With His dimmed eyes He looked along the surging ocean of hate and blindness; tears sprang to His eyes, the world became dimmed around Him, He saw it bathed in His tears . . . ! And behold, the blasphemy is mingled with the avowal of converted souls. The rage of passion is followed here and there by the emotions of mercy and pity . . . the crowd sneaks home beating its breast and below the cross the Holy Virgin and one or two devoted souls remain. These intone the prayer: *Ecce lignum crucis, in quo salus mundi pependit*. . . . We adore Thee, O Christ, and praise Thee, because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world. From them comes that which Christ seeks most of all: deep, compassionate love!

BELOW THE CROSS

Below the cross. There I stand by myself . . . in the spell of God's infinite love. My soul is seized with mercy and the deep emotion of adoration. Tears spring to my eyes. I would bend my head but the cross draws me on and compels me to look upon it; for "they look upon me and weep . . . " is what He promises.

(*a*) What have we given Thee, O Lord, Thee whom we ought to have loved and adored? Thou camest to earth and Thou wert confined in a cave. Hardly wert Thou born before Thou wert compelled to flee to Egypt. Then Thou didst wear the guise of a carpenter. Once we went to meet Thee with palm branches and Thou didst weep. Once didst Thou entrust Thyself to us and we chose Barabbas. Once we wished to wind Thee a wreath and we made it of thorns. One picture we took of Thee and it is the "*Ecce homo*" which was left to us. Thy mother became the sorrowful mother. Once Thou asked a drink of us and we handed Thee vinegar. Oh, who would have believed that this should be Thy fate amongst us, and that such should be Thy way on earth? And now Thou art hanging here like a statue of prayer. Thou criest for mercy with outspread arms and open lips. Thou hast prayed on many mountains but Thy prayer said on this Mount is the cry of eternal "interpellation." In the night of the infinite, great God, the supplication froze upon Thy lips. Great and holy is the Lord who did not pardon even His own Son . . . ! In what a terrible sublimity the cross announces this! Men, fear God and love Christ. This is what He cries towards you, cries it to final exhaustion. Oh, if ever, hear His word to-day; He begs us to guard and treasure our soul.

(*b*) Upon this naked figure the only "ornament," the crown of thorns, deeply touches us. He started as betrothed, as hero, therefore crown and wreath befit Him. He struggled for the wreath and this is what He received. Instead of glory and love they crowned Him with the wreath of hatred. . . . What a curse: this is the curse of sin, hell, and hatred. And He took all this upon Himself so that no harm should come to us. Christ wound a wreath of all the curses meant for the world so as to take them upon His head. Crown of thorns, briar-bush burning in the wilderness, the fire of immensely sweet and strong love burns, flames, and darts up in Thee . . .

here also we hear the words: Holy is the ground upon which Thou standest; take off the sandals of thy feet! And how holy this ground is! And this our Moses does not shrink from the mission of redeeming His people, but bends His head crowned with thorns below the holy will of God and the holy law of sacrifice. Thou, O crucified Lord Jesus, art our briar-bush, pale-red and sweet are Thy roses, Thy holy wounds, but upon the cross they are indeed full of thorns! Thorns as well as beauty are needed so that the soul should blossom forth.

(*c*) The blessing and strength of Jesus' blood is deep, holy mystery, "*mysterium fidei.*" It broke His heart and shed its last drop of blood and "the house was filled with perfume of balm," the heavens and the earth were filled with it and more especially the Church. Upon its altar stands the Grail Cup of His Holy Blood! One drop, O Lord, only one drop give us! This fiery blood, this blood of fire, burns out poison, agony, sin, death! Every drop of it induces eternal spring to break forth from our soul. This sweet blood quenches thirst! It shines upon our brow as kingly anointment which the angel of vengeance and massacre avoids. Upon the lips this blood is divine sweetness and an eternal smile. In the heart it is the blood of heroes. What would we be without Thee, sweet, divine blood? What a curse would weigh upon us and overshadow us if Thy blood were not upon us and our brothers? When we go to Confession, we wash our soul in this blood. When we communicate, this is what we receive, and its fire glows upon our face.

THIS IS HOW GOD LOVED

This is how God loved.

(*a*) In the struggles of life the consciousness has to be lit with the knowledge that God loves us. This is necessary, for we need a great heart, and the temperament of the great heart is the consciousness of God's love. This gives patience, joy, and strength; this gives rise to faith and enthusiasm; this leads us on to sacrifice. God continually proclaims that He loves us. The Prophets are hard men, but even among these hard faces the divine love reveals itself as the bridegroom of the soul and sings the "Song of songs." Eternal wisdom cries after us and begs: "My son give me thine heart." (*Proverbs* xxiii. 26.) And then the old "*Sapientia*" appeared amongst us, He looked into our eyes as a child and lived with us. Then it appeared in the open and its words were like the songs of the loving soul and told us parables of the merciful Samaritan, of the father of the prodigal son, of the Good Shepherd. Men guessed that great love lives in Him and this knowledge broke forth from them when they saw Him weep at the grave of Lazarus: and they said "Behold how much he loved him!" All this is song and joy to us!

(*b*) He then prepared for the "*excessus*," for the excess of love. This is what He spoke of in His ecstasy on Mount Tabor. He wound a wreath, a "diadem," and bound a bouquet of myrrh for Himself. He had Himself nailed to the wood as the vine to the stake. Then His blood dripped from five clusters. His heart broke, and His soul was dispersed in a wave of fragrance. This became the revelation of love; this is how God loves. The heart of those who look up becomes unbowed, the frost thaws, and the words burst forth: *Dilexit, dilexit*. Magdalene, Peter, John, the Apostle Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena become seraphs and frame the cross with their wings." We also share this knowledge, emotion, and enchantment . . . . *dilexit*, *dilexit*.

(*c*) And Christ was destroyed by this "*excessus*." As sign is given by fire in the darkness so here also in the night of the world, in the dusk of doubt, the Lord set up the pillar of fire of the cross. Has he loved? is what we also ask; yes, indeed, He loved so that He consumed and exhausted Himself: "He loved and gave Himself up for me." He glowed and burned and was consumed by fire but He also burnt into me. Below the cross the most deep feeling is that Christ died for me. Let us not grieve there that the world is sinful. There my agony is none else than my own soul and the annihilating consciousness that Christ died for me. I forget all else, I only think of and remember the wounds of my soul, my vanity, my pride, and arbitrary will. These I weep for because I love.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES

"*And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 34.)

(*a*) This is the prayer of the interceding Jesus! He looks along the howling, ungrateful crowd, and the crowd appears to Him infinitely miserable. The short-sighted, dull-spirited mob whirls about there like a serpent's nest, like worms in the dust and mud, and above them this soaring Seraph, who begs for the mercy of God and says: "Father . . . !" Audacious word! The first word of Christ upon the cross. Surrounded by so much bitterness and cruelty His sweet, strong soul finds the appropriate word, "Father." Thy Son am I, different am I, I take and receive my emotions from Thy heart and not from the mud of the earth. Thy soul, not the blood which demands vengeance and embitters itself speaks out of me: Forgive them! They are in need of it, being unspeakably worthless. Forgive them! Grant that the greatness of my soul lift them out of their dwarfishness and that with my divine feelings they recover from their beast-like instinct!

(*b*) "*They know not what they do.*" Below the cross this is clear to us. They know not what they do, in what night they stand, and how far from God they are. They do not know it although they have deserved it. They turned away from the sun and drew a manifold midnight after them by their coldness, indifference, prejudice and hate. O Lord, forgive them and overwhelm them with pure, noble, bountiful emotions. Let Thy truth penetrate their heart. Through hate and strife the soul never finds the way to God, for it is a lowly, shallow, impetuous, vile, one-sided soul. It tends to enmity in itself and does not comprehend the Sublime. When we sin and deny the Lord for passion and instinct, we also prove to be insane. To sin against the sublime God is wicked madness. This is what we want to keep before our eyes. Then we will know what we are doing.

(*c*) Jesus told us several times what God is to us. Glorified by Peter, He said in the circle of His disciples: Not flesh and blood have revealed this to thee that I am the Son of God, but "my Father." He taught them how to pray and said: Ye are to pray this way: Our Father. Glorified in the resurrection of Lazarus, He said: Father, I give Thee thanks! When bidding them farewell, He disclosed to His disciples the vista of eternal glory with the words : I go to my Father. In the Garden of Olives, down on His knees, and twice upon the cross, He announces that God is His Father—here and now, in suffering and death, He is His Father. Once He speaks for us : Father, forgive them. . . . Then He speaks for Himself: My Father, into Thy hands do I offer my soul. When we suffer, when we are persecuted, then this is also our prayer and our joy : Father, Father!

JESUS AND THE ROBBERS

" *And one of these robbers who were hanged, blasphemed him, saying : If thou be Christ, save thyself, and us.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 39.)

(*a*) Often we do not understand why we suffer. If God loves us, why does He torment us ? " If Thou be Christ, save thyself and us . . . " Behold the blasphemy of humanity hanging upon the cross. But suffering is inevitable in the present world-order because of our finite struggling nature which is in its development, because of our moral battles, our frailty, and our sins. Christ suffers also and so does the malefactor ; but the malefactor blasphemes and Christ prays. The soul of the malefactor is dark and Christ carries heaven in Him. This is the difference, and this is the solving of the problem. By our moral superiority we rise superior to suffering. By rising to the heights of faith, hope, and patience we radiate sunlight and sense into the bewildering depths of suffering.

(*b*) " *But the other answering, rebuked him, saying : Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation ?*

And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds : but this man hath done no evil." (*Luke* xxiii. 40.) Most of the world's sufferings come from sin; for partly we groan beneath the curse of our own sins and partly because of the wickedness of others. We are continually offending God, despising His graces and ignoring the voice of conscience. Is it to be wondered at that we become entangled in suffering? Those who do not see "that they receive the due reward of their deeds," in those the feeling of depth is missing! The poor world, filled with the desire of the eyes, the desire of the flesh, and the pride of life, does not realise why it suffers. Let us offer all our sufferings for our sins.

(*c*) "*And he said to Jesus : Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 42.) Hanging on the gallows he recognises the King in Christ and what was more the King who passes through the gate of death into His Kingdom. O adorable homage to the King of glory! O faith which tears asunder the night of shame, disdain, and the apostasy of the Jews, and which sings this hymn to Jesus: My Lord . . . my King . . . king of the eternal Kingdom . . . remember! If Thou dost remember, then Thou dost pardon. To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise! I will guide thee there as the sweet treasure of my bitter suffering. Do not fear; endure. Thy bones will be broken but thy soul will possess the kingdom! . . . In this way one can endure cross and agony and this is what Jesus gives! To me also He says: Thou shalt be with Me, with Me! O Lord, let me be with Thee; take me into Thy kingdom.

Me receptet Zion illa
Zion David, urbs tranquilla,
Cujus faber auctor lucis.

Cujus porta lignum crucis,
Cujus clavis lingua Petri,
Cujus cives semper læti.

Urbs cœlestis, urbs beata,
Supra petram collocata.
Urbs in portu satis tuto,
De longinquo te saluto,
Te saluto, te suspiro,
Te affecto, te requiro.

THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

The sorrowful mother.

(*a*) Jesus trusts in His cross, He trusts that He will move man, for in His suffering deep sources of emotion open; one of these is His Mother. However we appraise the suffering of our Lord, the most astounding feature, which augments the tragedy to the infinite, is "His Mother." She goes on His Way of the Cross. This Way of the Cross is also a funeral procession; "His Mother" goes to this funeral. But it is also the procession of shame, disdain, and curse, and "His Mother," the woman He loved, goes too. Imagine what a darkness fell upon her soul in the night of hate and disdain! How blasphemy and curse rent her heart, and how her lips kept repeating His sweet name in the bitter, cruel world: Jesus, my Son! The love of God did not shrink from leading this sweetest soul on this way of agony and shame. The love of God demands sacrifice, and perseverance to the end. This is hardly understood by those who imagine love to be only sweet. Love and sacrifice!

(*b*) "*And the people stood beholding, and . . . derided him . . .*" (*Luke* xxiii. 35.) But someone else also stood there, who was immersed in deep pain below the gallows of her Son—"His Mother," to whom all this mocking was a glowing, sharp dagger. There she stood . . . oh, where has she come to since the Holy Ghost descended upon her, since she heard the *Gloria* in Bethlehem! Where are the holy kings who were led by the star of heaven to her Son resting in her lap, who represented the homage of nations? Look, O mother, what homage, what a feast! Where is the house where the Infant played, Nazareth, the realisation of "God with us"? God with us? Now too, here too? Yes, the Lord leads "His handmaiden" amidst joy and bitterness, and the maiden faithfully follows the Lord, faithfully in shame, misery, doubt, and denial. She is faithful, she does not doubt; she is faithful, she believes and loves. Come here, all of ye, learn to believe, learn to stand your ground in the midst of apostasy and decadence!

(*c*) "*When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing, whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.*" (*John* xix. 26.) Jesus takes farewell: God be with Thee, O Mother! Thou who hast laid me into the crib, lay me in the grave. Thou who hast put me in swaddling clothes, put me into funeral shrouds. Thou who hast placed a kiss upon the shining eyes of the child, thou shalt close my eyes. The world roars and rejoices. Receive My disciple to be thy son. The Holy Virgin looks up to her Son: Farewell, God be with Thee—she prays—My Son, the light of my eye; go into Thy kingdom! Now it is our turn to console the Holy Virgin, for we love her and partake of her agonies; we belong to her. She turns to us with her pain. It is evening, spring evening below the gallows; the earth shines in April pomp, the perfume of the olive trees and the breath of the palms sway along the mount of the skulls and there the sorrowful Mother stands, the wife of the carpenter. Great as the ocean is her misery! Holy well of love, Holy Virgin, let the sorrow of thy soul be also mine! I love thee, sorrowful mother of my soul. I trust Thee, for I am written into thy soul with the pain of Good Friday. If thou canst not forget that, thou wilt not forget me either! O Jesus, I trust! The faith with which we may trustingly approach Thy heart we derive from Thy Mother!

THE SORROWFUL HOLY VIRGIN

The sorrowful Holy Virgin.

(*a*) Her great love rendered her apt for the softest sympathy. Her soul was warm wax and every trait of Christ's face was imprinted in it. The night of the angel's salute, Bethlehem and Nazareth awoke all the energies of her emotional soul and with them she became one with her Son. Her soul lived from His soul and the deep shadows in her Son's soul changed to agony in her. She knew Isaiah and knew what He prophesied about her Son. She has already experienced the stony ways of the Lord and Bethlehem and Egypt did not point to power but to suffering. Her soul was all deep and gentle feeling for Jesus and as every vein of the dragon-fly wing is clearly printed on the damp soil so the soul of the Holy Virgin took in all the sorrow, the scourging, the wounds, and supplications of her Son. Oh, how the wood of that cross had thrust itself into her heart for three and thirty years and how thorny the briar-bush of her immaculate love became, and how that cruel pain of Good Friday flamed and burnt in her. Who can forget thee, O sweet, sorrowful mother? Behold the "*pieta*," the school of compassion. We are deeply sorry for Jesus because we truly love Him. We contemplate in our soul what and how much He did for us. This remembrance kindles our love as oil kindles fire. And in all this the Holy Virgin will direct us; from her we learn to pity and to love.

(*b*) The Lord Jesus did not have His suffering engraved and carved into wood and stone; it has been written in the Gospel with a very few words, but He has indeed imprinted it into the hearts, and the deepest, truest, most masterful and most painful memory is guarded in the heart of the Holy Virgin. He entrusted His holy wounds, bruises, agonies, and prayers to the consolation of Christianity, to the heart of the Holy Virgin. Here they are guarded and kept intact, and he who is able to penetrate into the heart of the Holy Virgin, the suffering Mother, will find Christ's living and continually smarting Passion in its sad sublimity. This is how we also have to carry the Lord's Passion in our heart. No, we cannot forget it. And this Passion guards the image of that seraph pierced with a dagger who stands below the cross and of whom it is said that she is "His Mother."

(*c*) The Holy Virgin had to stand there because she loved Jesus. The Lord Jesus linked her to Himself in dignity and grace and joy, therefore also in trouble and sorrow. She could not remain away. As she shares her Son's crown, throne, and heart so has she to share His bitterness also. She is the martyr of compassionate sorrow. She grieves with Him, because she loves Him.

She complies with His wishes, suffers with Him, for she cannot part from Him. She grieves with Him, weeps for our sins, and begins the lineage of those innocent but ravishingly beautiful souls who suffer for the sins of others and offer themselves as an atonement to God for them. These tracks Jesus trod into the hard, selfish world as the tracks of His uniquely deep, gentle soul. To many this seems a morbid disposition, but unjustly so. From the point of view of greatest love this is a flaming disposition and victorious force. Do not let us break down in our compassion, but behave as the strong ones of the soul!

(*d*) The Holy Virgin also stands below the cross on her own account. She had to partake of this distinction, so that her merits might grow to heaven here. Great vocations are cruel. Their way leads amidst naked swords; it was the great vocation which came to the share of the Holy Virgin that she should suffer in complete abandon and in the greatest sacrifice. Her soul had to creep up amongst the rocks of Golgotha to the terrible cross and there to say these words: Thy will be done. Her soul is like the surging of the ocean, but the pearl of this bitter ocean is absolute abandon. This bent, beautiful, humble head is the masterpiece of God! He conceived and shaped it. He placed her in the dark world of ravaged souls as a new motive of sorrowful, spiritual beauty. What a difference between her and Job! There is patience, yielding and trust there as here, but the pathos in the Mother of God's suffering is unattainable. Here pain mingles with the consciousness of undisturbed happiness; it kindles fire in the briar-bush but does not scorch off the leaves of the wild-rose.

Oh, to endure, to endure beautifully, to suffer divinely, to weep, yes, but not with a ravaged, distorted face, of this no soul is capable except the soul which suffers with Christ. Patience is the beauty of suffering.

(*e*) And yet her suffering was not a swoon, not the worldly self-abandon of the hapless mother, but strong reaction. The reaction of faith and divine love descended into this suffering, and ordered and inspired the movements of the heart. Virtue and spirit penetrated everything here. She saw that suffering was the way of her Holy Son and therefore her vocation also, and she took it as an honour, as branches of the wild-rose meet for her wreath. She wished to go this way, for she went in Jesus' tracks. And we go in the tracks of the sweet, sorrowful Virgin.. A great lady went from her far-away castle on foot to the village church, even in winter and snow, and when her accompanying servant was cold, she said : " Step in my tracks," and behold the tracks were warm. Glowing souls leave warm tracks after them in snow and frost, and soft tracks in stone and rock. Let us go in their traces ! How glorious and sweet it is to follow in the Virgin's footsteps. They broke the Serpent's head, so they will also break thorns !

THE WORLD WRAPPED IN MOURNING

" *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 45.)

(*a*) The world became dark, it dressed in mourning. It indicated what a darkening of souls was needed that the Son of God should die between two malefactors on the cross. How can we cover the sun in our soul, how

God Himself? The darkest midnight is the soul turned away from God. This night further indicated the dark anger of God which only Jesus can appease. Perhaps it became night so that Jesus could say His last evening prayer. God created silence and emotion around the cross of the Son of God, that His prayer of "*Sitio*," I thirst, should be heard all the more powerfully! I thirst for the world, life, and above all, souls. I thirst for grace and mercy for them. I thirst for faith, eternal hope, love, and the state of God's children. Give me souls . . . this sigh of Jesus is breathed into apostolic souls. It is the prayer of His last night! How great is the spirit, how beautiful the grace which awoke in the Lord this final sigh!

(*b*) "*And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani? . . . My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (*Mark* xv. 34.) This is the final revelation of the heroism of sacrifice. We have already heard this complaint on the Mount of the Olives, but then "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him"; now it is the last time that the complaint breaks forth from His heart, which complains to us what He has to suffer, what His heart and soul endure in the night of God's anger! He complains of abandonment, for He suffers the greatest agony of God having abandoned Him, taking away His consolation. Maybe He is also complaining of that other abandonment: that in spite of the cross and suffering, souls perish! This is the final sorrow of Jesus! How we have to defy the enemies of our bliss to ease the sorrow of Jesus! Oh, Lord, would that Thou hadst not wept for me!

(*c*) "*It is consummated!*" (*John* xix. 30.) What God thought of mercy and pity, what He promised through the prophets, that He accomplished in His Son. He became our comfort and joy, our hope and faith. Thanks and adoration to Him for this. *Adoramus te*, *Christe*, *plenitudo gratiæ!* But the consummation did not come of its own accord. It was He who accomplished the work of salvation. "I have finished it"—is what He might have said—"I have lived through and experienced and fought for the merciful acts of God. I have not only taught but suffered everything." What would doctrine be without life, what would the Gospel be without the dear, strong Jesus? He is the accomplishment of the glad tidings. Oh, thanks, thanks be to God that Thou art, that Thou hast lived amongst us, that Thou hast suffered for us! Thy divine life is everything to us. What would we do with our poor individuality, with our limited wisdom and experience? How would we be able to instruct and direct others, if Thou wert not? And now our adoration, homage, and attachment are complete.

(*d*) "It is finished. . . ." The heart of God is filled to the brim with grace; it overflows and strength flows from it, and who stands in this stream becomes revived. His sin departs and his strength returns. Jesus also gives strength; His life is a source of life to us; He assures us that we indeed possess what we know as beautiful, good, and holy. We are not allowed to doubt of strength. Our religion is not the funeral-dirge of tired souls, but creative breath for creating the new man. Our morality is not mere enthusiasm, but reasoned spiritual life, energetically accomplished. We know that we have many hindrances and difficulties but we strongly believe of each one that we will conquer it.

(*e*) It is finished: He did what was possible for us—and He sacrificed what it was possible to sacrifice; He gave up everything. He had Himself glorified upon the cross so as to draw us on; He gave up His soul and shed His blood; He has nothing else. As the tower of the Gothic cathedral finishes in a cross, so the strength and love of Jesus blossoms forth on the cross. His soul is filled with the knowledge of final victory; this word "It is finished" is the most beautiful song of victory. This is that holy sunlight which fills His soul, this is that consciousness which comes to His consciousness in the shape of infinite energy at the end of His life. "It is finished" means a heaven also upon the cross; to Him who is able to say this the gallows become a kingly throne and this prayer of His is world-judgment. If only we could say it at some time or other; where, when, and in what surroundings is immaterial.

"FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT"

"*And Jesus crying out with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost.*" (*Luke* xxiii. 46.)

(*a*) This is that victorious cry; the soul of Jesus rises above night, agony, bitterness, cross, shame, and death, and in His trust and love He begins to sing: Father . . . ! This is His victory, His song! He has here and now a Father; He rises from the cross to His Father and from the thorn-crowned pillow breathes His soul into the hands of His Father. He steps from suffering into happiness, from the mount of the skulls into eternal glory, from darkness into light which knows no night, and from death He steps into flowering spring-time. There is no greater contrast in the world than that between Calvary and the departed soul of Christ. These are the contrasts the believing, trusting soul encounters, but the settlement will come one day. This is its victory.

(*b*) This is also the final prayer of our immortality: My soul to heaven! With what conviction we know that our soul is immortal! Pessimism doubts but suffers unspeakably from this and suffers because it intrudes itself into unnatural, impossible opinions. If all is vain and finite then the idea of death would not worry us and that immense contradiction would not arise in our heart. Transitoriness, death, would not be so great a trouble if we were rooted utterly in nothing. Transitoriness is only agony to beings who are meant for eternity! We feel our soul. Nothing is capable of checking the free being which is my soul; it possesses that terrible power of withstanding the brain, of withstanding love's entreaty, the charms of beauty, even God Himself. Without the soul this great fact is incomprehensible, without the soul life is agony, strife, and comedy. Without the soul we do not know ourselves and we misjudge existence and the world. Therefore we believe in the soul, in the immortal soul, and in eternal life.

(*c*) Experience verifies this. Great suffering does not lead to denial; it rather develops in us the knowledge that we belong to a higher order. Man is most strongly attached to religion by the knowledge that the innermost part of his being withstands transitoriness. The world and he himself seem to him incomplete, imperfect, and senseless, and if he does not live for ever he does not know what he lives for at all. Let us live here upon earth in a way that at our death we also may be able to say with faith in immortality: Father, who delivereth me from evil, from the greatest evil of everlasting death, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.

THE AGONY OF LOVE

The agonies of the loving soul.

(*a*) We often view the historical Christ. We go with Christ chiefly in our hard days, with the memories of our dark Maundy Thursday and Good Friday strifes. We feel the same emotion; we comprehend His longing, His faintness, His worries and agony . . . opposite the heartless, cruel, dreadfully filthy, and loathsome world. We understand the sorrow until death . . . and understand that cruel word! "This is your hour, the power of darkness." We are sorry for the striving, praying, sorrowful man! We best comprehend this deep sorrow if we imagine how He looks upon sinful, heartless, ungrateful souls . . . His perishing works . . . upon the ruins of His creation. . . . What is it I ought still to do is His plaint. How He turns to us and begs for compassion: Remember my poverty . . . He is the "*pauper servus et humilis* . . ." in this cruel fate . . . in this night . . . in the clashing of these beast-like passions. That is why the "*tristis imago*" becomes carved into our soul. The kerchief of Veronica becomes the veil of our face; it is through that that we see the world.

Pity makes us approach Him; harmony collects the sum total of suffering into the temperament of faithfulness and zeal: I comprehend Thee, O Lord, I am near to Thee. "*Tecum usque cruciari, parva vis doloris est, malo mori quam fædari, major vis amoris est.*" Thy poverty, Thy gall-drink and bouquet of myrrh are also mine; the crown of thorns already entwines two hearts: Thine and mine. We could say: cruel fate; no matter; so it had to be, on this way . . . this the fate of the soul in which there is true spirit; this is its bridal dowry, this is its passionate communion, its sweet taint, and when we suffer together with Christ we whisper to ourselves: Behold I have got what I dreamt of, I wished to suffer with Him, now that is my sweet fate . . . let me enjoy it!

(*b*) Let us view Christ now. Oh, how sad storm and suffering rack me, how the horizon of my soul becomes overshadowed . . . how its churches and altars give way . . . how its life fades, when I see Christ here and now, here in His work, in this dying Christianity . . . when I view this sad, mourning, Christly inheritance . . . when here and now I see that sorrowful anger . . . that bitter, cruel ocean, that eternal night . . . here it is I stand now instead of Christ; here I strive and weep instead of Him, here I stand and break down and fall. Great is my agony for Thy love, O Lord Jesus! For till I render the sowing wind of the soul fresh with the breath of my heart, till I turn the dust of the road to fertile soil with my tears, till I change the polar-frost of souls into spring, till then I shall have need of many prayers, supplications and enthusiasm. But this is my joy; joy to know that I suffer upon the same cross as Thou and that the same scourging tears me which Thou hast received. It is my bliss and joy to know that the bleeding lips which I adore are kissing my soul.

(*c*) Entirely for me. All the more deeply I dive into my agony and the more intimately I experience the trouble of Him who is the hope of my soul: the more deeply He allows me to glance into His soul and psychology, and I feel as if the attention of my agony would slowly turn elsewhere; as if I would forget this ungrateful, ugly world . . . and the bitterness. As if the world would be wiped out from my consciousness and I were left alone with my cross, with my Christ, and as if I would not refer the agony to the world but to myself and see its cause not in others but in myself. Jesus looks upon me and His glance opens the view for me in which I see that it is I who am that world. What world? That is a collective name, a generalisation . . . you, you, you, that is I, I myself am this agony, the cause of this suffering. Not for others but for me His blood is being shed. . . . This stony way is the way of my life, which is the Way of the Cross of Christ; the calumny, blame and mockery surged towards Him from out of my soul, this thorny thistle was gathered on the field of my misery. I hear it: He loved me and handed Himself over to me . . . it is for my sins that they wounded Him.

I, I, I, for me, for me. . . . My sin has caused the entire agonies of Christ, my infertile soul thirsted for the whole blood of Christ . . . it cried after Him dreadfully. Oh, if I awake to the consciousness of this cry, this cruel God-murdering cry which sounded from my soul . . . oh, if I look into this abyss of evil for which God has put the cross up there as warning-post, then I become stunned . . . I am shaken. All the blood of Christ and His agony is for me, *for me*; He gave it all for me, so that my sins should be forgiven, that I should be able to love, to become purified, so that I should be able to rejoice and hope, that I should be able to come towards Him with a crown of myrtle on my head, with palm branch in my hand that He might embrace me and hold me to His heart . . . oh, oh, I understand. But what will be with the rest? *Quid ad te?* Let it not disturb me. The depth of love forgets everything and completely hands itself over; see I have completely given myself to Thee. For Thyself alone. And the blessed Jesus comes towards me and bends over me; I cannot go out of His way. Where should I go to? I cannot ask anyone else to hold this trembling, sweet body . . . I cannot bend my head . . I cannot lower my eyes; it is in my soul that His last glance breaks and in His kiss He breathes His soul upon me: it is for thee, for thee I have lived and died! Therefore, in return, we have to live for Christ and die for Christ with the love of the martyrs.

SPONSUS SANGUINEM

Sponsus sanguinem.

(*a*) Into the sensual world which is absorbed in sin the Lord Jesus introduces the pure, new, divine man. This is His care which He carries in His heart as the artist carries his ideal and the mother her child. This care becomes eloquent upon His lips; He speaks of the children of God and of the kingdom of God. It is for the creation of this new world that the Lord sends Him: the spirit of the Lord upon Him. The prophet also encourages Him: Only seek this. He taught this to His Apostles: He held the soul to be His betrothed. St. Paul testifies that He so loved souls as the betrothed her spouse. The nights that Jesus spent in prayer on mountain-tops and forests are witnesses of this longing love: to exterminate sin and to ennoble man. This is cruel, hard, sad labour; we faint, turn grey, and sweat blood from it. How far did He succeed? Oh, my Master and consolation!

(*b*) But He had to struggle victoriously with the world; to flood light into the night and clear waters into the swamp; He had to awake the sensual, heavy world; He had to bring to its consciousness what sin is, and therefore He clothed Himself in pain. He appears before us torn, broken, covered with wounds. Learn from Me, He says, what sin is! They scourge Him and crown Him with thorns. Look at Him, utterly exhausted, on the cross! And this holy sign stands before the eyes of the world which is sensual, libertine, longing for pleasure, which raves about free-love, this world which is tainted in its theatres and art. He stands by the wayside, by the slippery obscene ways of sin. The intoxicated stagger past Him, the greedy world tears past Him; He stands at the side of boulevards, beside the night-paths of prostitution, where sin is already clothed in consumption, and infection. In this dizziness, in this stupor, in this wilful intoxication, stands the cross, the holy sign which announces the hate and love of God, the punishment of sin and its forgiveness. Oh, all ye who pass by . . . take heed, look up to Me!

(*c*) Then the Lord Jesus lifts down His wounded hands and feet from the nails, steps down from the cross and starts out into the dazed world, for which His heart is so heavy, and with His bleeding hands He soothes the flushed brow of youth, strews the lilies of the pure maiden-souls, and on the sores of the rotting world He places His feverish wounds; and as Eliseus of yore threw himself on the dead youth, so the suffering Christ with His wounded body does with the world. He goes into the sanctuary of families, He places on its walls the image of His thorn-crowned visage. He looks into the museums, theatres, dancing halls, hospitals, asylums ; He is shaken and weeps as He did over Jerusalem. Oh, come after Me and struggle ; come nearer if ye are weak ; feel the breath of My warm heart and soul. Struggle even to bloodshed ; ask for grace in virtue of My suffering, and ye will conquer !

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS AND BURIAL

" *And when evening was now come (because it was the Parasceve, that is, the day before the Sabbath), Joseph of Arimathea, a noble councillor, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.*" (*Mark* xv. 42.)

(*a*) We throw one glance at the scene of Calvary on Good Friday evening. The shadow of evening descends ; the crowd disperses, partly smiting their breasts, partly obdurate. Fatigued sorrow and pain broods over Nature ; a prayer ascends to Heaven from the heart of the Mother of God, a sublime finale to the *Gloria* that rang out on Christmas night. The Holy Virgin holds her Son in her arms and adores Him. She looks at Him and kisses His wounds. Her heart is the burning light at the foot of the cross. Faith and the love of Christ are concentrated in her heart. The sorrow of John and Magdalene is only human : that of the Holy Virgin is Christly. Her emotions are holy Christianity : faith, ardour, gratitude, purity, martyrdom. It is with these emotions that she kisses and adores Christ. *Salve, Mater dolorosa, Martyrumque prima rosa, Virginumque lilium !*

(*b*) Then come the friends of Jesus: Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, the converted centurion. They took the body of Christ down from the cross, they brought the myrrh and balsam, the aloe and linen. They take the crown of thorns off His head, they wash His holy body, and anoint it, and as sweet the scent was which now spread from this poor bier, so sweet, deep, and intimate was this mourning. Truly what emotional depths open in their hearts in the preparation for this funeral! How was Judas Machabee the hero buried long ago? Here also the funeral-procession starts: Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, St. John, and the centurion carry the Lord, the Holy Virgin and some women follow, the inseparable adherents of the Lord. Without pomp or ostentation they start into the dark evening and into the depths of the grave. But their hearts are full to the brim; myrrh and scent flow from them, and the memory of the Lord in our soul is like a flowering blossom to-day.

(*c*) They laid the Lord in the new grave hewn out of the rock; they wrapped Him in clean linen bedded in a mixture of myrrh and aloe. St. Paul wishes us to die: buried to the world with the Lord. Our grave is the pierced heart of Jesus. Our linen is woven from our feelings, and the self-denial of myrrh preserves us from decay; in this way will our life be protected and assured in God. But around the rock grave we see with our spiritual eyes the angels of Bethlehem, who spend this holy night in mute glorification and adoration. Instead of the *Gloria* they whisper *Gratia*.

(*d*) There the malignant man also busies himself; he seals the stone and sets a watch. . . . The kiss of the Virgin and the seal of the Synagogue are upon the grave-stone. It is with such contrasts that life is full. Our passion is also such; we kiss this grave-stone and place grateful adoration and loving remembrance there as watchers. Jesus wishes us not to forget Him. At Christmas we rejoice, on Good Friday we grieve. We also look upon the Holy Virgin with deep compassion, but our soul cannot suppress the consoling thought: We shall see Thee again, our queen, on the third day.

THE DESCENT TO HELL

He descended to hell.

(*a*) We know little of the world of departed souls; Jesus only hinted at it here and there; our human notions cannot be applied to it. The good souls await Christ. Until He comes they cannot see God. Therefore their chief emotion is this great Advent; their prayer is longing, and the appearance of Christ is their great Christmas. How the soul of the Lord Jesus shines amongst them, the sun of eternal happiness! How it became spring and awakening in this world of fatigued souls! How the song clung on their lips: Hosanna, bless is He who comes in the name of the Lord! How they paid homage to Him, Patriarchs, Prophets, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist! Oh, where Jesus is, there is spring, awakening, there strength and joy, there they are able to sing: *Jubilate Deo omnis terra!*

(*b*) With what holy joy and victorious feeling the Lord looks at these pure souls. These are His Passion; He gave blood and life that they might be pure and "without blemish." Behold now He steps from the murky earth into the sunshine of the pure, beautiful souls. This is already divine territory; this is where strong life longs to go! My God, my soul also longs to get there! How much sin there is in life, how much imperfection, prejudice, petty view-points, narrow-mindedness, weakness, cowardice, obstinacy, haughtiness, softness, and hardness! How deplorable were my soul to arrive shipwrecked, ragged, and poor to the eternal shores and to be condemned there to a long "quarantine." Oh, my Jesus, cleanse and burn me, so that when Thou catchest sight of me Thine eyes will light up with joy!

(*c*) These souls He takes with Him. His claims for purity of heart are great, but they become fulfilled. The "thrice Holy" lifts up the purified souls, and as the swallows when migrating rise above the Alps, so do the souls rise to the sublimity of the divine Saviour. The infinite ocean of light and life calls them and they go, they fly. We honour God's great claims on the purity of our soul; we bow before Him when He tries us, when He visits us with illness, suffering, or depression of the soul; we know that He is purifying us, and we draw nearer to Him!

ARISE!

Arise, my glory!

(*a*) Arise, hasten! Jesus is only in the grave for 37 hours; the three nights and three days between His death and resurrection have been accomplished. He hastens; He arises in the early morning. He is our dawn, the dawn of eternal life. He is our feast; every Sunday of ours announces this resurrection! Hasten good Sun, shine upon us; dawn upon us, glorious Sunday; let the night of sin be short.

(*b*) The souls Jesus has delivered from the outskirts of hell hurry to His grave, like shining clouds of dawn . . . groups of wandering souls on silver wings. What mute music! Eternal life passes over the earth. Jesus rejoices; the souls around Him sing the song of deliverance; "*Cantemus Domino, gloriose enim magnificatus est!*" This is the first procession of resurrection! What gratitude, what adoration for the blood and wounds of Christ! What joy in His victory! What desire and longing for His heart and for the eternal light streaming forth from His heart! This is how we are to go in procession! Arriving at the grave the souls look at the corpse of Christ with holy sorrow, and grateful longing. They look at His holy wounds which brought bliss to the world. The soul of Jesus also views His body with deep emotion, the wonderful instrument of His merits. He sees the image of death upon it and now He faces it, looks at it as only He can look, not passively but with the feeling of victory. Death, I break thee—He says—I died, that life should arise. This grave is thy grave, here thou rottest away; I, the life, I arise. Adorable, holy power which conquers evil. Those who do not believe, only view death passively, tolerate it hopelessly. Not so with us; with us life beckons to us even beyond death. Jesus, my life, my strength, my victory!

(*c*) Then the soul of Christ brings His body to life again with that strength with which the glorified soul is able to capture and change matter. On Mount Tabor He showed it, here He ultimately put it into action. He clothed it in beauty and light, transfigured it; He changed it to the pliable instrument of His will. What does the soul do in hypnotism, what sensitiveness and spirituality it breathes into the body in ecstasy! And in beatification it permeates the body and makes fresh energies appear in it. From now on He is able to pass through doors and walls; He appears where He wishes; He changes so that He is not recognised. Oh, sublime, glorious Jesus, Thou art our ideal and example. From Thine eyes the rays of beatified life dart forth. Thou wast the first to experience eternal glory; Thy strength and beauty became the joy of eternal youth. Hail, Thou, our first-born brother, Thou new-born One! We long for beatified life, for the spiritualisation of the body. We long to celebrate Thy Easter with Thee. Therefore, even now we wish to achieve the victory of our soul over our body and our instincts. We wish to discipline ourselves; we wish to assure the reign of the soul in the mortal body for the sake of beautiful, strong immortality.

(*d*) The characteristics of the risen body: (1) *Light*, with which the soul overflows the body. There is light on Christmas night and there is light on Mount Tabor. The visions of the apocalypse are bathed in light; the saints also are beautiful and bright, for instance St. Magdalena of Pazzi and the intercessor of Valencia from whose light the churches shone at night. Jesus shines in indescribable beauty. (2) The inability to suffer any more. Suffering, sadness, and bitterness cannot approach Him. His face is not hollow, there is no expression of unhappiness upon it. Oh, how passion tears and furrows the soul, and how suffering makes it wither! (3) The characteristics of the risen body are, further, swiftness.

It is swift as the spirit and does not feel the barriers of space; it looks down with compassion upon the paths of virtue, upon those often monotonous, thorny, heavy paths and it encourages: Go on, proceed! Those who sow with tears, will reap with joy! (4) His body is etherealised. What a difference there is between the mud of the ditch and the petal of the flowers; one is pervaded by life, the other not. The soul can pervade the body more and more, till at last the body becomes etherealised by it. Let us become etherealised, let us take upon ourselves the soul of beauty, willingness, and discipline! These are the characteristics of resurrection. We need as much as possible of them so that the "beast-like man" should disappear.

AND THE GRAVES WERE OPENED

"*And the graves were opened . . . and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose.*" (*Matt.* xxvii. 52.)

Jesus is the model of our resurrection. Above all we have to arise according to the soul, according to the words of St. Paul: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above." (*Col.* iii. 1.)

(*a*) Will we arise? Many are spiritually dead. Holy Scripture speaks of the living dead, of dead faith: "Faith without works is dead" . . . it knows of dead "good works": "It seems thou art great, strong, rich, and verily thou art a poor naked beggar" . . . it knows dead hands, dead hearts; it knows eternal death in which the longing for happiness dies. It knows of dead members of the Church whom the soul of God does not enliven. And the world also knows the dead and alive; Ibsen writes about them in his drama called "When the dead awake." Dead and alive, according to him, are those who live for the world, and seek for earthly glory. To work for nothing is the tragedy of worldly life; the *Divina commedia* is different, that is part of eternal life. Dead and alive are those who have forgotten to live because they have not comprehended life. Such are those men and women who have exhausted their strength in wild passions and at last come to the consciousness that this is not life. Such are those artists who when they became artists ceased to be men. Who looked at the beautiful merely as a model and not as a value with which to fill and ennoble their hearts; they created ideals but contradict them in their life. Artists who have killed the soul of another for the sake of art, so as to depict sorrow. Those who sought after recognition and reverenced external good, and have only engraved and hewn this into stone, not their living consciousness. . . . Poor world, great morgue; dry bones without the refreshing breeze of God! Send forth Thy Soul and it will create—create life, living men, living faith, living good deeds, living heart! We have to loathe this death, this dead and alive wallowing, this powerless faith, and dead hand!

(*b*) Can we arise then? Oh, of course we can! For this purpose we have first of all to awake to the consciousness of our faith and set free the sleeping forces of our soul. The forces will tremble through us and will burn out of us the stain of sin, the earthly, worldly, stupid emotion; then they will move and stretch and start us; they will induce us to mould and liken ourselves to Christ. This life has innumerable grades. It exists in the baptised infant; awakens in the youth well prepared for Holy Communion; flowers in the ardent girl of high ideals; and develops in the struggling believer who acquits himself well in his Easter confession. It was present in Abraham, in Judith . . . it existed in St. Francis of Assisi, in St. Aloysius, and it exists in the most modern Christian man. The forces of grace work for resurrection, that we may arise for the real, the valuable life. We wish to arise here and now, so that we may live for ever. The forces awaken the soul in us, the spirit of the Lord Jesus. We wish to live for the soul; to encounter the difficulties of life as well as its joys, with the soul.

(*c*) The faith and hope of final resurrection urge this resurrection of the soul. The completeness and abundance of eternal life shrinks from the emptiness of the present life and forms it according to its image. Eternal life does not develop from empty, base, soulless life; from an empty seed no oak grows. Therefore, we have to live here and now eternal life upon earth, that is, we have to think and will, to endure and struggle, to enjoy and suffer in a supernatural way, out of faith and love. We have to train our soul according to the motives of faith. We have to feel the breath of immortality, so that we may be able to rise above weakness and misery. Then in our feelings we will already play the prelude of happy immortality. Let us think often of our immortality. We rejoice in it and conquer our dejection with it.

THE JOY OF THE RISEN

(*a*) Exulting joy was the Easter prayer of the arisen Lord Jesus; His cry was the cry of the victorious warrior.

"Why do the people bear ill will?"—is what He asks with the Psalmist—"The One living in heaven laughs at them . . . and I have been ordained to be king." He rejoices, "As such who rejoice at harvest." This is His feast; He rejoices, "As rejoice the victorious about the booty they have won." Three days previously on the Mount of Olives deadly sorrow contracted His heart, to-day joy overflows Him; joy in the shape of glory, with which He proceeded towards the "*excelsa*" and attained the highest honour in heaven, joy in the shape of happiness, the happiness of the first beatified man!

(*b*) Jesus therefore follows the inclinations of His heart and does not forget us. His joy continually reminds Him of the earth, His interest is vivid and warm, and it is in this frame of mind that He is present in the Holy Eucharist. Do not let us believe that He is tired and weak; the temperament of beatification lives continually. It is from eternal ideas that we also derive strength. Do not let us disquiet ourselves unnecessarily; zeal sometimes tortures itself; there is reassurance wanted there also; failure should not darken the vision of God's victories.

(*c*) Such transfigured joy has no permanent residence on earth; our joys are mingled with pains. But this is no trouble, it is an advantage; for joy often renders us superficial, whereas pain deepens the emotions of the soul. Let it deepen but not dry them; let it cleanse but not diminish them. Let pain serve the purpose of making us come to our senses, to improve us, and rouse us, so that one day we may attain perfect bliss.

CHRIST IS VERILY ARISEN

"*I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live.*" (*John* xi. 25.)

(*a*) The verily arisen Christ is our palm branch. This is the palm He gives to every follower of His and those who take it in hand and hold it fast, share His glory with Him: they also will arise. This faith-incited humanity has the longing for eternal life, as if the grace of Christ, the dew falling from this palm branch, fell upon souls in the shape of fiery drops, and anointed martyrs. Every martyr died for faith; every Christian death shouts this daring, apparently senseless phrase: "We will arise." This faith comes from the grave of Christ and not from ancient myths. The phœnix has long ago indicated immortality but no martyr-faith arose from it; spring has long since sung the song of longing for life, and that of immortality did not follow; in spite of poets, songs, and ideals, humanity did not awake; in spite of heroes and myths, cultures broke down; in spite of the longing of life which pierced the world as a passionate complaint, scepticism made the idea of resurrection fade. Oh, holy sepulchre, thou breathest immortal life; thou givest certainty to our hopes.

(*b*) The idea is not sufficient. The thinker seeks for reality behind the idea, for what is the good of idea and image when it is not the image of truth and reality? What is it for, when it is no more than the coloured blossom of incomprehensible endeavour? What is the idea of immortality for, if it is swallowed up by the darkness of the grave? What is the longing for eternal life for, if its wreaths fade upon graves and its bridal veils become shrouds ? What is to become of our ideals in the face of death, and in face of the mute, inexorable power of transitoriness ? Ye are deluders who work with abstractions. Instead of fanciful ideas we need reality ; what we need is the " risen " Christ ; we need Him actually and not figuratively, according to the letter and not symbolically.

(*c*) Only individual eternal life is real immortality. This is what the arisen Christ showed us. The resurrection of the body set the world in motion, that is what brought spring. There is only one rebirth and that is : the spring in which Christ's palm waves ! Let us catch hold of the palm . . . let us take care that it does not fade in cold hands, dry hearts, and dark surroundings ; that it does not fade from doubt, indifference, and worldliness ! Let the dead bury their dead ! Let us proceed, "*palmæ in manibus !*"

JESUS APPEARS TO HIS HOLY MOTHER

Jesus appears to His Holy Mother.

(*a*) The Holy Virgin awaited Jesus, she awaited Him in faith ; for the Lord had said : I will arise. It is a divine word which will be followed by divine action. And this deed will be done by Him and till then His Holy mother waits, believes, trusts, and prays. She prays ardently, her soul shines from her eyes ; her lips whisper : "*Exsurge*, *exsurge*," arise, arise, my sun, my strength, my joy ! Arise, awake ; Thy Mother watches and waits ; shorten her holy vigil. This is also the attitude we should adopt towards God. We should believe in the great, divine declarations and await divine deeds ;

we entrust ourselves to Him with sacrificial zeal. We must call on the Lord: O Lord, assert Thy strength and reign! Let Thy truth shine and let it enliven souls with the spring awakening of refreshed Christianity. We believe that Thou createst a new world now also, here amongst us. "*Exsurge Domine!*"

(*b*) The Lord also longed for the Holy Virgin; the sweet Lord longs for the sweetest soul; He longs because she was true to Him in His sufferings and loved Him when He had no beauty and external glory. She walked His Way of the Cross and stood below His cross. The Lord consoles such a soul and in His consolation He makes it forget its troubles and sorrow. The Lord makes her feel His glory and strength and pours His own life into her. Therefore, we have to persevere in our dry, unpleasant, spiritual moods; it is just at such times we show that we value the Lord more highly than His consolations, that is, than ourselves.

(*c*) The Lord realises these longings and wishes of the Holy Virgin, He appears to her in glorious beauty, and the Holy Virgin falls on her knees and adores her holy Son. Oh, this is divine happiness for the Mother of God! As sweet as the night of the Incarnation, so sweet and bright is the dawn of resurrection. Jesus strains His Mother to His heart and changes her infinite pains to innumerable joys. And the Holy Virgin kisses the wounds of Jesus and breathes into them the love of her beautiful, fiery soul. She gazes on Him, kneels down, embraces Him, and rests her head against Him. Now it is well, well indeed, my sweet Lord. It is good for me, for it is good for Thee; Thy life is my life. Thou liveth; Alleluja! This is the Holy Virgin's incomparable Easter! Joy that only God can give. "I will be Thy joy and reward"—is what He says to me also—"and when I give Thee joy thou feelest as if psalms and cithers are resounding in thy soul; '*exsurge psalterium et cithera.*'" It is this joy of the Holy Virgin which we greet in the Antiphon: "*Regina coeli, latare.*"

ALLELUJA !

"Alleluja, *Alleluja.*"

(*a*) Joy is wanted in the hearts where the Holy Ghost resides! Joy is wanted in the souls bearing a cross, in sorrowful and wounded souls, struggling souls. Where God is, there joy shall also be; for joy is strength and dejection is weakness. To rejoice is to feel the force of life—to be sorrowful is to weaken. That is why joy often heals—and sorrow makes one ill—life walks hand-in-hand with good spirits and joy, death is combined with sorrow and mourning. All that is good for us, all that makes us prosper also enriches, and rejoices us; all that renders us poorer makes us sad! We have no virtue that is strength if we possess no joy. The greatest strength of spirit is needed for spiritual life which is faithfulness in small things and little duties from morning till night. Here the excitement of publicity is not present, the electrifying effects of festive occasions do not exist. What is more, we often have to fight with the tediousness of custom also; therefore, we are in need of joys which the Holy Ghost gives us.

(*b*) We need joy because joy renders us capable of mixing with our fellow men. If we are depressed we bear them with difficulty and the expression of goodwill disappears from our brow and face. If we are in good spirits we do not take our difficulties to heart; but woe to us and others if crossness and bad temper disturb us. The world is unbearable to us then and we see enemies in everyone. Good spirits are a good medicine; nothing comes amiss to one in good spirits. Nothing surprises and upsets such a one. He is not quarrelsome, and his eyes are not daggers, he looks at the good sides of others; he is ready to think well of everyone; he does not take offence, and is not taken aback, he takes unforeseen difficulties well. His soul is not the valley of sorrow in which complaint turns rancid; where sumach trees and bitter leaves flourish as well as thistles, and where even the air is foul.

(*c*) We need joy to be able to deny ourselves. As the Gospel urges the cross, it has also to educate us to joy. Joy renders the soul capable of self-denial; souls glowing in the name of love are sacrificial. Do not be astonished that not weeping eyes but smiling souls make the greatest sacrifices. Joy is the source of sacrifice. The walls of the cloister seem gloomy iron bars, but do not believe that sorrow resides there. Only joy and willingness for sacrifice endure that life. This merry self-denial frees the heart from the fetters of selfishness and renders it capable of soaring upwards, that is, of loving! Why have ye left off self-denial? Because ye have become tired and sour. For when ye loved self-denial, then fresh, spring breezes made your heart swell and dew trembled on grass and flowers; the foliage buzzed with mysterious inspirations and now everything is faded, dry, and dusty. Why?

(*d*) We derive joy from the *sacraments* and from *zeal.*

We ourselves are witnesses that revival takes place under the influence of spiritual joy. When our heart expands in consolation and enthusiasm, then we grow strong. And what would become of us if we were never enthusiastic? Therefore we rightly say that joy is *life*, growth, enthusiasm, and spiritual strengthening; that joy is sunshine, which revives, makes us live, develops us, and from it the trunk of the tree thickens, it flourishes, and its fruit ripens, whilst in winter it draws its fibres together and vegetates but does not live! Let us therefore endeavour to rejoice! *Gaudete in Domino semper.* Let us endeavour to derive consolation and joy from Holy Communion and prayers. We must not easily excuse the lazy and lifeless ones; they are themselves the cause of their troubles. Maybe we too have little joy on account of our selfishness, faint-heartedness, and lovelessness. We are free in our speech, undisciplined in our feelings and imagination; we long for pleasure, enjoyment, and praise. We treat God with neglect. . . . Let us change all this!

"HE IS NOT HERE, FOR HE IS RISEN"

"*And in the end of the Sabbath when it began to dawn . . . there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven: and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it: And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men. And the angel answering, said to the women: Fear not you, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said.*" (*Matt.* xxviii. 1-6.)

(*a*) Fear not, ye who seek Christ, rather rejoice and feast . . . even on the brink of the grave, for your Lord is infinitely great, powerful, and glorious. He is resurrection and life, and upon the upturned grave-stone not a marble figure but I, the living angel of the Sublime, am His remembrance. As at Christmas the angel of the Incarnation told the "great joy" to the shepherds, so at Easter the angel of the resurrection announces the Gospel of strength and victory, that of His being "Risen." In the faithless world which triumphs, where Jesus was finally ruined and where only the gallows and grave remind us of Him, of the Messias, there the hand of the Lord had the grave-stone removed upon the third day, this grave-stone which was sealed officially, solemnly, publicly, with the knowledge of thousands of men and the consent of three courts of justice, and into the ears of Jerusalem this empty grave and the latest Gospel thunders: "He is not here, He is risen." This is in every way the greatest "*Signum*," Christ's most public miracle. There is no miracle in which publicity is so marked a feature as in this one. It is to this miracle of His that flocks of faithless unbelieving men lead Christ, it is to this miracle of His that the measures taken by the Jews draw particular attention. They utilise the concourse of people who have come to the Easter festival to invite them to see the shame of Christ, so that they should be witnesses of His crucifixion. Now they are all witnesses of His empty grave. St. Peter says: "Jews and all ye who live in Jerusalem: ye have killed Jesus of Nazareth, the man vouched for from God amongst ye by forces, miracles, and signs. Whom God has made to rise from the dead. . . . This Jesus, God has made to rise, to which we are all witnesses. Hearing these words they became moved in their hearts and said: What are we to do?"

(*b*) This is at the same time the most festive proclamation of Christianity, by this miracle Christianity became the most public fact. This miracle captured 3,000, and later 5,000, souls in that same Jerusalem which saw the cross on Golgotha and the grave in the garden. Their evidence is unequivocal, their tradition continuous and undisputed. When St. John says, "*quod vidimus et manus nostræ contrectavere*," what we have seen and touched, He does not mean this about himself alone but about hundreds who were witnesses to Christ.

(*c*) This is the greatest miracle, for it is the most divine, and it is the least human, for it took place when the Man Christ was in the grave. God let His trustworthiness depend on what was, humanly speaking, a complete fiasco, so that we should not doubt His divinity. We know how incapable of action a dead man is ; so much so that we say of him : "He was," not "he is." Man can only do great things in his strength, in the health of his soul and body, by the eloquence of his word, in the warmth of his heart, by the fire of his eye, as Christ also did in His lifetime, "*vir potens in opere et sermone*," but He revealed His essence completely through His death. Only He could say : "I shall rise again from the dead ; when Christ the Man is no more, ye will see that I am God!" Oh, Lord we believe Thee ; we believe in Thy miracles. "*Operibus credite.*" (*John* xiv. 10.) His Apostles do not tire of announcing the world-wide evidence of the miracles, this is what the Christian parishes announce, this is what the individual Christians announce with their mouth and blood. Matthew mentions 42 miracles, Mark 37, Luke 43 , John 14. In the Gospel, which in small octavo comprises hardly 200 pages, more than a hundred miracles are mentioned: Raising of the dead, healing, multiplying of bread, and finally resurrection! O Jesus, we believe in Thee, for Thou hast indeed revealed Thyself.

JESUS AND MARY MAGDALEN

"*But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Now as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre: And she saw two angels in white, sitting. . . . They say to her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith to them: Because they have taken away my* Lord*: and I know not where they have laid him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing: and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her: Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, thinking that it was the gardener, saith to him: Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him: and I will take him away. Jesus saith to her: Mary. She turning, saith to him* Rabboni *. . . Jesus saith to her: Do not touch . . .*" (*John* xx. 11.)

(*a*) Mary loves, she is anxious; she seeks the Dead, she wants to see Him, she would like to serve Him even now; she wishes to take Him away as Tobias took his dead to burials, as the ancient "*fossores*" carried their dead into the catacombs, so this woman, strong in love, also wishes to take Him away. Others also busy themselves around the sepulchre, Peter as well as John, but this woman takes root here and looks and weeps and speaks distracted words. Intuition and the depth of feeling is the source of action, whereas arguing is the death of action. But perhaps Mary exaggerates? Even so, what would it matter? But can there be exaggeration in holy and faithful love? Oh, let us work with our hearts, let us love, rejoice, weep, and yearn. Our own experience tells us that the work of our salvation is difficult if we only meditate, it is easy if we pray. There are works which only the heart can accomplish! Great, devoted, faithful love is the genius of the heart.

(*b*) It is this faithful, longing, clinging soul which Jesus consoles. Sublime are these words in St. Mark: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, *he* appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." (xvi. 9.) In these lines the pathos of the Gospel throbs, the great and superior love of Jesus' heart. Many short-sighted souls take this amiss and ask: So Jesus loves the converted sinner better than the immaculate one? But those immaculate ones who love Jesus magnanimously do not take this amiss; in their love they have no time for making comparisons and arguing. We love and do not envy anyone. If we have always been pure, we rejoice at it; it is not a burden to us, but a grace, and we do not claim privileges on that account. Oh, let us rejoice if we have not fallen. It is a grace which Magdalene did not possess. Then let us love, let us love better, love more ardently, for if we have not fallen we owe more. And if we were as unfortunate as Magdalene, then let us be as ardent as she was and Jesus will not despise us. Behold, He showed it. He spoke one word, one single word, and Mary fell upon her knees. He said a shining word in which His soul vibrated. O Master, Master, how Thou art able to speak! Oh, speak, speak to us and our soul will submit itself to Thee and pay Thee homage!

(*c*) Mary wanted to clasp His feet, but the Master said: Touch me not! The souls in the other world are all sublime, aristocratic spirits. Here upon earth man is like a child—very sensual—and lifts everything to his mouth and nibbles. The Lord orders a certain holy reserve, which surrounds greatness in us with homage and keeps it upon its pedestal. This we need; there must be holy, humble reverence in us towards Jesus. This we must assert everywhere, in our prayers and chiefly in our Holy Communions.

THE VICTORY OF THE GOD-MAN OVER DEATH

" *But go, tell his disciples and Peter. . . . But they going out, fled from the sepulchre. For a trembling and fear had seized them.*" (*Mark* xvi. 7.)

Upon the upturned grave-stone as upon a pedestal, that mysterious power which conquers death and sin reveals itself and we also are seized with holy terror. The victory of Christ is startling! He conquered unbelief.

(*a*) His glory is that bright light which disperses doubt, that undaunted reassurance which smoothes the turbulent waves, that security with which we meet all our anxieties: He is the Son of God. This ray of light shines already on Good Friday evening. But this was only twilight. Then the centurion said: Verily He was the Son of God. But the sunset has turned into a brilliant sunrise. Not on the cross but in the glorious resurrection we received God's revelation that Christ is the Son of God. Faithlessness, the sacrilege of the crucifixion, the triumphant frenzy of denial, made this highest revelation necessary: He is risen, therefore He is God.

(*b*) Doubt whispers around the Lord; mortality and death cover Him with a double dusk; true that the Apostle holds the lamp of faith beside Him, he who says: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. But the light went out on Good Friday. The Messias died, He is done with! The palm branches of trust faded also in the hands of the Apostles. The disciples have therefore to light the lamp afresh, not with earthly fire, but with eternal light, with "*lux perpetua*." In the sepulchre of Christ God lights it and shows us the "*Lumen Christi!*" "*Deo gratias!*"

(*c*) Everything had to happen so; absolutely so. Christ had to place His banner of victory in the gate of death; the Lord of life had to present Himself in the frame of death; this black frame shows this glorious picture a thousand times more strikingly to the world than did the midnight of Bethlehem the Holy Christmas. Ye can rage, for I have a throne, I have a footstool; I bring my crown of pearls from that depth in which ye all suffer shipwreck, all, all, Pharaohs, Cæsars, satraps, sages, prophets, poets, beauties; and I gather the floating thread of my laurel from the flowery fields of eternal life. Ye will see what "*victoria*" I sing; ye will become deaf and blind if ye do not love me; but if ye love me ye will look with eyes wide open with ecstasy and ye will cry: Jesus, Jesus, Thy ways are the lonesome ways of glory, only Thou canst walk upon them. How good that Thou comest upon the ways of glory and strength to us and for us.

ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS. I

"*And behold, two of them went the same day to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus himself also drawing near went with them. But their eyes were held that they should not know him.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 13.)

(*a*) As the blur of the shepherds' fire on a meadow in May so is the unbelieving soul in the world; it is ugly, sad, tired, and without hope. Behold two such tired men go thus on the way to Emmaus, and many such go upon the ways of the world. We believed and hoped; now we do not believe, do not hope. We turn to the world and to pleasure with our agonies, we would like to forget ourselves. This is not the way to God. We are also seized sometimes with dejection and boredom and we turn to the world for mitigation. We may seek consolation in Nature, in pleasure, in our friends, but then let us return again to Jerusalem, to the holy city; Jesus will be our real and true consoler. What consolation would the disciples have found in Emmaus if Jesus did not come towards them? Therefore let us divert ourselves according to Jesus' will, that is, so as to be able to guard our elasticity of soul. Let us economise with our strength and develop it.

(*b*) The Lord Jesus joins the disciples but they do not recognise Him, and He asks them: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk and are sad?" The soul of Jesus swims in the joy of Easter Morning, it shines and is happy but He looks at these depressed souls with great compassion and

He rejoices that they complain of their sadness in front of Him. He encourages them further: What manner of communications are these that ye have with one another?

The disciples yield to the encouragement and tell the sorrow of their heart. How their words must have pleased Jesus, chiefly those which referred to Him: " . . . he was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." This was glorious praise; they could not have given a more beautiful testimony of Him. Jesus also wishes of us that in our meditations and daily examination of conscience we should bring forward our troubles great and small. This renders our intercourse with God very intimate; it enlightens and educates us.

(*c*) "*But we hoped that it was he that should have redeemed Israel.*" For we were indeed in need of it. We awaited a Messias, for we have many troubles and agonies. This old expectation of the heart which hopes for refuge from agony and trouble was our dower also. Yes, it was theirs and it is also ours. We also are in need of redemption. The stupid, sinful existence which first becomes soiled and then rots is incomprehensible and unbearable. The tremendous contradiction of law and sin, ideal and baseness, death and the longing for eternal life press for a solution which can only be a divine deed full of grace. This we hope for! We hope also for virtue and merit for the crown of eternal life. All this Jesus gives to us. We remain upon this way; the hope of eternal life gives us enthusiasm! This is what renders us happy even here and gives us goodwill and perseverance in our struggles.

ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS. II

"*O foolish, and slow of heart.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 25.)

(*a*) Jesus handles transgressors sublimely; in the consciousness of His energy He is able to raise them out of their depressed mood. He awakes the great ideas of God in them; He throws open the sublime perspectives of faith; He encourages but also reproves them. "O foolish and slow of heart." The two disciples feel the sublimity of the foreign pilgrim's soul, they feel that fresh breath which His soul breathes. It has a good effect upon them. Only soul shall touch soul; one can only heal with the superiority of soul, life, and strength; not with quarrelling and nagging. To those who are down we have to bend. Let us do as the sun, which does not descend from the height but sends down its rays. Our height is the bounty of the soul and its nobility; do not let us descend to bickering and become soiled. Let us cleanse others with the nobility of our own soul.

(*b*) "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things that were concerning him.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 26.) God imagined His Messias differently from you, that is, the ideas of God are not your ideas. Upon His figure there are also such traits which ye willingly forget: self-denial and suffering. But ye are not right, it is He who is right. How often are we also guilty of this fault! We believe that the Gospel only promises consolation and does not demand sacrifice. If Jesus went into His glory upon the way of suffering have not we also to go upon this way, upon His way? Let us at last tear asunder the mirage of thoughtlessness. Stand on thy feet—says the prophet—and speak and act as is meet to a manly soul!

(*c*) "*And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going: and he made as though he would go farther. But they constrained him, saying: Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent. And he went in with them.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 28.) Jesus made as if He wanted to go on, although His heart drew Him to bestow on them the greatest grace. Nevertheless, He wanted this great grace to be the reward of humble demand; He wished them to pray: Abide with us!

It is the desire of our Saviour to be with us and to reside in our soul. He wishes to overwhelm us with the blessings of His grace but He wants us to beg for this grace and to detain Him with us by our ardent prayers. Often we are depressed because we do not endeavour sufficiently to detain Jesus by our ardent prayers. Do not let us only behave passively; let us act! Let us examine ourselves, to see if we have an ardent desire for the grace of the Saviour. If we find that we do not possess this wish then let us ask fervently for it; let us beg that He should always remain with us, especially when the clouds of temptation gather above our head, when the night of doubt and suffering falls on us, but chiefly at the hour of our death. "Abide with us, for it is towards evening and the day is far spent."

JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES

"*That same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst.*" (*John* xx. 19.)

(*a*) When the evening came and excitement had thrown the faint-hearted disciples hither and thither; when they were afraid, and when they also hoped; when they only spoke in whispers, but their heart was loud, then the Lord came and stood in their midst. He came late. To the Holy Virgin and to Magdalene He came early; they had Easter in the morning. To the disciples He came late. Maybe they did not deserve it, perhaps they were not in the appropriate mood, perhaps the Lord was testing them, maybe He waited for them to be together. There are many reasons for the Lord's tarrying and no one can reproach Him: Why not before? Oh, for He comes to us, the Lord walks amongst us and whether He hurries or tarries we have always to receive His merciful attentions and make use of them in love and homage. If He tarries, we persevere; if we are disconsolate, no matter; we know that it is at such times that we have to show our faithfulness. And we do it, we do so willingly, so that we may be consoled all the more sweetly.

(*b*) Closing the doors, united in love . . . this is the attractive circle to Jesus; He likes to go where there are contrite souls who love each other. In contrition we find ourselves and in love we prove to be social souls. Both are needed for noble development. Who is not whole and complete in himself cannot be good and valuable to others, and he who turns away from brotherly unity to seek himself will be unsociable and tired. Therefore we have to be collected, disciplined, but at the same time kind, brotherly men.

(*c*) "*And said to them: Peace be to you!*" This is the greeting of Jesus. Do not fear, for ye love me. Neither shall ye fear later, whatever happens! Do not question much: What will be? How will it be? But acquire peace for yourselves and then all will be well. Peace for your souls in purity of heart; peace for your blood in discipline; peace for your disposition in the magnanimous view of the world! Peace I wish you, so that ye might believe and hope strongly and not let yourselves be picked to pieces by bitter, quarrelsome, dark, and cold ideas and feelings. Let your true Easter be in your disposition; enjoy the fact that resurrection and strength belong to you; yours are my grace and love. And that ye might strongly believe, "behold my hands and my feet, handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me have." "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." Let us educate strong faith in ourselves which is able to rejoice after having excluded doubt and faint-heartedness.

" PEACE BE TO YOU "

"*He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you! As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*" (*John* xx. 21.)

(*a*) What a loving emphasis in this expression: "again He said: Peace be to you." It was as if He said: This is what ye are in need of. We have to grow into peace, we have to become rooted in peace. The Gospel begins with "Peace be on earth," and finishes with "Peace be to you." There are the wish and longing, here the fact! Likewise ye can acquire peace in my suffering and peace after my resurrection. I send you to forgive sins, I send you to reassure souls. Ye would compromise my mission if ye yourselves were not to enjoy peace. That is why so often the word is without effect, for life's explaining fact is missing in you!

(*b*) The Father has sent me, and I send you! Oh, dear ambassador of the Father; dove, as well as eagle; barefooted Apostle and also ideal; He became the glory of the One who sent Him and the blessing of His mission. And the Father hath sent Him to us; to us, to the darkness He sent light, to our earthly existence, beauty, to death, life. He sent Him to make light, to develop and give life. And now He also sends us, that we also should be sunshine from the sun, refreshing water streamlet from the source of depth, and blossoming flower from the root of Jesus. He sends us, that is, He infuses that brightness into us; this refreshing, blossoming life. With His own soul and force does Jesus anoint His Apostles to dignity and power, who go instead of Christ, in whom Christ speaks, whose feet are therefore so dear, and who are therefore so dear to us. This is what we reverence and love in the Apostolic Church; because of this mission is the Mother Church dear and holy and treasured by us. Here the Lord is, here are His soul and mission, as if He Himself were walking amongst us!

(*c*) "*When he had said this, he breathed on them, and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*" (*John* xx. 22.) My soul, the Holy Ghost descending from the Father and from me, I breathe into you and into the Church. The spirit of rebirth, of the forgiveness of sins; this which prays in you and anoints Prophets and Martyrs. Ye are only media of this Soul: the strength which remits sins, which purifies and gives life is not out of you but out of Him. It is with this consciousness that ye shall go into the world, and if someone doubts, tell him that I said that it is not ye but He, not the man but the Holy Ghost, who remits the sins through you! What a sweet, great grace! What a directly divine gift the Sacrament of Penitence is! We come here as to Christ, we bow our head as in the radiance of the Holy Ghost. And the priest has also willingly to receive our penitence; for he is under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is with these sentiments that we are to go to the Sacrament.

"*He breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*" (*John* xx. 22.)

(*a*) To forgive sin; only God can do so, and this our heart instinctively feels and claims. Sin will be set right only by forgiveness; who wishes to flee from his sins in another way is mistaken and does not recognise the divine in himself. We can improve ourselves, weep, and make atonement but what will become of sin, the knowledge of which burns into our soul? How the knowledge of sin testifies the reign of the law over us; how it cries: I have a Lord and I have offended Him! My will rebelled against His will; this is the evil, this is the agony! The sinful soul almost feels the Lord more than the peaceful heart. The knowledge and agony of sin are lifted from us by the grace of the sin-forgiving God: Thy sins are forgiven! Oh, what sweet music this is to me, what a gracious love and atoning embrace of my God this is: He forgives . . . He forgives me! He does not cast me off; He stoops and lifts me! Science, art, power, and enjoyment are unable to do this for me. It is a special divine feeling of the soul when it is able to whisper that it is forgiven; then its heart is full as well as its eyes.

(*b*) Nothing proves the fact that God has been amidst us more than the institution of the forgiveness of sins. He came to forgive sin, for this is what humanity begged for, what it expected; this is what it strived after. And He ordered the godly-human way of the remission of sins in the Holy Confession where everyone kneels separately at His feet and awaits the divine consolation of: I absolve thee. Christ sent the confessor with the divine power of the remission of sin, with the oil of consolation, and the grace of atonement. The world, the Church, and man around me are blotted out and I face Christ alone in my confession. To Him I whisper my sins; His word it is I hear; in the Sacrament it is with Him I come in connection; it is the falling of His blood I feel upon my soul and I become purified. Jesus understood what I need; it is not enough for me to repent of my sins; it is more I need. Holy, mysterious contact with Him is wanted; this is the Sacrament of Penance! Thanks to Thee for this, O Jesus! We will give ardent, true thanks after every Holy Confession of ours.

(*c*) Receive ye the Holy Ghost . . . for this spiritual, divine mission, ye priests! Ye come towards us in the tracks of Christ, with the blessing of the Gospel, when ye remit our sins. "How graceful are the feet of those who announce peace," how fatherly their hand, how compassionate their heart! For this great, sublime vocation Christ-like men are needed. For this thrilling trust with which believers, that is, followers, pour their agonies and shame into your ears, angelic apostles are needed. Let ye feel this. And how much we reverence and love you, the trustees of our eternal hopes and worries! How well we understand St. Catherine of Siena who kissed the foot-marks of the priests. Surely she saw eternal life growing there!

JESUS AND THOMAS. I

"*And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh . . . and said: Peace be to you. Then he saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.*" (*John* xx. 26.)

The divine Saviour stands here with His five shining wounds as the sun opposite night. On this white Sunday this Thomas is a black soul. He is black because he is faithless; black because he is sad and suffering. St. Thomas is the veritable type of the worldly frame of mind turned away from God: he is haughty and faithless because he is disorderly, and because he is faithless and passionate, therefore sad and suffering.

None of the other ten would wish to change with Thomas. We see the storm surging in his heart. We see with what black clouds the mind of Thomas is overshadowed; we feel sorry for the violent, self-conscious man, but we do not wish to do the same as he. The divine Saviour makes His five wounds shine against this disposition and assures him: Do not be faithless, but believing. That thou shouldst be it, touch my wounds and I assure thee thou wilt change in soul, different spirit will possess thee.

The Lord Jesus kept the five holy wounds in His glorified body that He should exercise this unrivalled influence till the end of the world.

(*a*) The first trouble of St. Thomas is his unbelief. That the unbelieving man should be cured, he is to look with attention at the great fact which is the Lord Jesus. For God talks with facts and expresses Himself in events. The most glorious event and fact, brighter than the sun, is the risen Christ. The grave of the risen Christ marks a change in the feelings and way of thinking of the Apostles. Not the idea brought this about but the Messias speaking to them. The psychology of the Gospel is a mighty deep fact which converts everyone who thinks. But St. Thomas not only saw but was also reassured. He became reassured just by touching the wounds, that is, by experiencing Christ's love. How do ye wish to reassure a rationalistic and doubting soul? Make him feel that God loves him. He has to feel and experience what we call the warm flood of grace, the love of Christ, which shines from His five holy wounds. That is why Philip said well to the eunuch: "If thou believeth from thy whole heart then thou canst be baptised," and ye will believe strongly if ye acquiesce in the love of Christ. Who so loved me will not cheat me. Let us be possessed with the ideal love of the divine Saviour, then the coldness of the world will challenge us, not for the reason of doubting Christ but that we might endeavour to gain victory over the world with glowing, great love.

(*b*) St. Thomas is a passionate soul. His passionateness reveals itself in the hardness of his soul. One of the chief sources of our instability is the hardness of soul and heart, the passionateness of flesh and blood. This heart is the "world" taken in the bad sense. In every heart there is enough of this and it reveals itself sometimes as haughtiness and at others as fleshliness. The Roman women placed raw meat upon their face at night, for this preserved the freshness of the skin and the colour of the face; Christ kept the wounds of His torn body because of the beautiful souls. We have to touch the wounds of the Lord Jesus. His children have to cling with glowing brow and feverish, throbbing heart to the wounds of Christ, so as to find relief and mitigation. That fire extinguishes our fire. Let us touch the wounds of Christ with trust. From these impressions every ugly feeling will be extinguished in us.

(*c*) There are sad and suffering souls and the efforts of the whole world would not be able to render every one joyous and merry. Do not let us think that with the development of culture sufferings diminish. There will always be sad and suffering souls. The divine Saviour kept His wounds for them so as to console them and that they might be reassured and rise to the dignity of Christ-like suffering. He kept His holy wounds so as to encourage and embolden us to value our sufferings as the benefits of God and bear them for the sake of Christ. "Behold I have marked thee in my hand," enter my wounded heart, that is such a refuge from which there is no way out. For as it is written: The hands are pierced, the feet are pierced: who enters into them goes through them. But the heart is lanced in such a way that who enters it remains there.

JESUS AND THOMAS. II

"*Put in thy fingers hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side.*" (*John* xx. 27.)

(*a*) Christ kept His wounds in His glorious body, He surrounded the five grains of myrrh with glory as if He would have said: Look ye, I was also like you; it is from this weakness that glory comes, like the cloud from the cool valley, like the flower from the ground, like glory from battle. The wounds of these hands indicate the hard labour which Christ accomplished, the "*improbus labor*." . . . We often work in hard, ungrateful labour; let us persevere! The wounds of the feet indicate the rugged, difficult ways. . . . The wound of the heart points to the arrows of hate, calumny, and heartlessness of the world! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." (*Galat.* vi. 14.)

(*b*) How these wounds will kindle our ardour if we consider that they not only shine towards us, but also assure us that God looks upon us with mercy and compassion and does not forget us. The Lord often proclaimed that He does not forget us, but what assures us more of this than that He "wrote us into His hands"? Here it is written down who thou art to me; here it is written what thou hast cost me. Behold what the Canticle of Canticles says has happened: "Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm, for love is strong as death." (viii. 6.) The assurance of this mercy kindles our love; the wounds of Jesus are flames of fire to us. The Lord thinks of us and His thought is blessing! As the lighthouse to the sailor, so are these holy wounds to us. This is where we seek refuge from storms in the strifes of our soul. This is where we learn to love, to make sacrifice and bring offering!

(*c*) Terrible are these holy wounds to the obdurate ones. What will they say if this five-fold ray of light penetrates into their dark soul and pierces them as a terrible charge and damnation? Behold what the Lord has done, given and opened to us! Had we reason to be mistrusting, to darken and turn away? At the Last Judgment the five holy wounds of Jesus are the condemnation of the wicked. And if we are able to endure wounds for Christ, then the five holy wounds will justify us. Until then we will present to God the five holy wounds of Jesus, entreating Him to forgive our cowardice and sins, and we will strive on undauntedly. We do not complain but we glorify and follow our Leader.

" MY LORD, AND MY GOD "

" *Thomas answered, and said to him: My Lord, and my God.*" (*John* xx. 28.)

(*a*) Thomas experienced in this moment what the Latin calls " *Deum pati*," to experience God. Great is God; we look at the infinite from the small measures of our world. Our narrow-mindedness bears witness to Him. We speak of the world but cannot grasp it. Our world is a small piece of mosaic. How little of reality we conceive with our notions and the content of our ideas. . . . This greatness overwhelms us; our mind, sentiment, disposition, and will react and what becomes idea, disposition, adoration, ardour, and zeal by this reaction is what we call religion. This is what He, the Infinite, finds out in us; this is His touch, approach, and influence. . . . And if we dive into the depths of existence we cannot bear it without Him. Behold, He clasps us, occupies, and draws us on . . . *Deum pati!* It is when we take in His ideas that we become purified and repent of our sins, and pay homage.

(*b*) He is so great that He is alone in Himself; the world disperses before His face. As "the sun is but the shadow of the good God," so the whole universe is but the footprint of the Infinite and counts as nothing when compared with It. "*Tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus* . . ." He overpowers us all the more the deeper and more spiritual we are. He reigns over our mind, heart, and will, and we say: O Lord God, Thou art the only true reality, bounty, beauty, and sanctity. This is what happens to Prophets, who look at Him, Him only; Apostles who talk of Him, of Him only; Saints who sing to Him, and to Him only; great souls whom He has graciously taken to Himself.

(*c*) And if Thou art my Lord and my God, then Thy will be done. What is Thy will? This is our chief question, chief aim, chief duty. What is the will of God in our position, vocation, and the present circumstances of our lives? What is the will of God in our temptations, enticements, and our difficulties? Only this is of any account! Those who give themselves up to God, God returns to themselves, to their life and activity. The soul of such will be a source of strength. Give thyself to Him and thou wilt recover thyself full of joy and strength! Thou art poor because thou giveth little to the Lord!

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND HAVE BELIEVED"

"*Jesus saith to him : Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.*" (*John* xx. 29.)

(*a*) Firstly we need faith, as devotion to God, for amidst the problems of infinity nothing can direct us but faith. Faith carries the torch. Our science, culture, and æsthetics bring us only to the dawn and twilight. We do not despise these, but they do not satisfy us. Our æsthetic culture does not satisfy us even if we have such teachers as Goethe. Worldly beauty, artistic enjoyment, and literary riches do not silence the need of the soul for depth, sublimity, and God. Fear of God and love of God are needed by the heart. Everything finite has the dust of the grave upon it ; it is poison ; we must shake it off. My soul is the twittering bird of consciousness which awakes from the earthly existence to the life of the "other world." Deep, intense longing overflows us. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

(*b*) Faith is what we need to absorb us ; in the awakening to our consciousness deeper and deeper perspectives open ; we stand in front of a window from which we see into existence and its original cause. In our thoughts we sum up existence, aim, and longing ; we feel the superiority of spiritual existence above material and passing things, and in the conviction of immortality we recognise the mother tongue of our soul. We do not comprehend the barbaric languages of transition, of purposeless existence, and annihilation ; those are animal sounds. And in that absorption the longing arises for the sublimity of divine revelation and for the divine and historical figure of Jesus. We see the Lord with the eyes of the spirit and soul and believe in Him.

(*c*) Faith is needed as metamorphosis and regeneration. We do not merely awake but also shine; in the reassurance and joy of our soul we have a sense for Christ-like perfection and beauty. We are sorry for the products of modern culture: class-hatred, the exclusive worshipping of economic interests, the vulgarity that follows in the wake of semi-education, the contempt for authority, the predominance of selfishness, envy, and impertinence. But we know that the more these gather strength the greater will be the longing of the world for spiritual metamorphosis and change. To be reborn, not from flesh, blood, and selfishness but of the Holy Ghost, and of the soul of divine life. It is with these feelings that we kneel before the Lord and say: Lord, I believe, change me to Thy likeness!

"HE SHOWED HIMSELF FOR FORTY DAYS"

"*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many proofs, for forty days . . . and speaking of the kingdom of God.*" (*Acts* i. 3.)

He spoke with them of the kingdom of God which had to arise here upon earth in them, by them, and around them. Yes, here and for this He gave strength, sufficient strength, and it depends entirely on them if this kingdom is to enter strongly and sublimely into the world. So of this kingdom of God they are the possessors and likewise the agents.

(*a*) They will be its possessors if they feel and experience God and are filled with Him. He leads them continually deeper into the true sense of the Gospel; He opens new views to them. He wishes them to be the salt of the earth and its sunshine, "*sol et sal*," and having won over many, they should form the unity of brothers under one head who is to be the first servant and steward of the house and kingdom of God. Let us come to the consciousness that the "*regnum Dei*" is here, is amongst us. There are strength and ability for it even if Christ is not visibly amongst us. With that trust we have to behave therefore even when the world changes around us and when its pillars fall. The "*regnum Dei*" has to exist! With what conviction have we to occupy the *regnum Dei* for ourselves! It must be, it has to be, and it will be!

(*b*) They will be the agents of the kingdom of God firstly by the Gospel which is embodied in their individuality and which streams forth from their entire being, and secondly by the Sacraments entrusted to their hands. In marriage our origin is blessed; and we are reborn by water. We eat one bread, the symbol of Christ-like unity; and we are anointed with holy oil on the battlefield of our life and also upon our sick-bed, and we entrust our spiritual wounds, the wounds of our soul, to the sin-forgiving love of the Church. How we have to reverence these unpretentious but holy signs: water, some drops of oil, bread. But their effect is burning, scorching, purifying. This water was made fertile by the soul, the oil is from the olives of that tree which was watered by the sweat of Christ. Throw your souls open to these mysterious influences; divine strength streams into you. Take this cleaning and this salve as if Christ were performing it upon you; it is He, He is here; He bears us anew, He forgives, He anoints, He anoints us with His healing oil, partake of these and beg for them as for the great grace of Christ. It is ourselves we have to blame if we do not approach Christ in the Sacraments.

JESUS APPEARS ON THE LAKE OF GENESARETH

"*There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas . . . and Nathanael . . . . and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter saith to them: I go a-fishing. They say to him: We also come with thee.*" (*John* xxi. 2.)

(*a*) In spite of resurrection, glory, and the coming of the Son of God, the physical and economical stream flows on; the moral order does not change at once. Behold also the Apostles of Christ; these country men were rooted in the customs and workaday life of the fisher-folk of Galilee; they were superior to it only with their inner convictions. The beginning of the new order originated with them; they carried the germs of the new world in them. This is the example of our development; we are rooted in the present and work for a better future; we fish and slave, but infinite forces are locked up in us and long for liberation. Let us realise that the workaday life is the soil out of which eternal life grows, that is, if there is soul, there is faith, hope, love and activity.

(*b*) "*And that night they caught nothing.*" Night and day, success and failure alternate with us; joy and sorrow, sadness and merriment are mirrored in our soul. This is how God has arranged the world. And yet we cannot say that the world acts fully in accordance with God's design, in the sense that men do not employ their abilities in the best possible manner. Many abilities lie fallow; God permits this. There will be therefore night and failure, bitterness and sorrow, but let this not be because of our fault. Let our positive forces always serve light, success, and strength! Men, ye are to do everything ye can—this is the will of God—and then . . . also to endure night!

(*c*) "*But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: Children, have you any meat? They answered him: No. He saith to them: Cast the net on the right side of the ship: and you shall find. They cast therefore: and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*" (*John* xxi. 4.) From the shores of Jesus from eternal life it dawns; His glance is sunshine; His love is favour; we look toward Him from the dark and mist, wet and shivering, waiting for His help. He questions: Ye are hungry, are ye not? Your strength and life fade? Do not fear; I will obtain life for you also; but feel and experience that the eternal shore directs the ones struggling upon the ocean.

(*d*) "*That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord. Simon Peter when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him . . . and cast himself into the sea . . .*" Our psychology is flooded with sentiment and on that our ideas, assurance, doubt, mood, temperament, health, and character depend. Peter did not recognise the Lord, but he hears that it is He and immediately casts himself into the sea and swims; the boat goes too slowly for him. And John recognises

Him, absorbs and enjoys Him; he remains seated, for he is always with the Lord. This is the heavenly, the other one, the earthly love; this is the contemplative, the other one the active life. We very much need the latter; let us endeavour to get nearer and more like Christ. Let us work for this; to walk upon earth, to swim amongst waves; but always to strive towards Him. Love gives eyes, it is love which colours and inspires; it is love which gives intuition. Let us look with the glance of Jesus; how much we will see! We will then also see joy and hope when others see but an indisposed, sleepy world.

"SIMON, LOVEST THOU ME?"

"*When therefore they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him: Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*" (*John* xxi. 15.)

(*a*) Jesus asks this question three times, that is He urges: Peter, love Me, love Me, very much indeed. I have great plans for thee and thou art only fit for them if there is loving soul in thee. Thou hast to form part of Me, be united with Me, then wilt thou be able to lead others to Me. Otherwise thou wilt have no sense for this. Love Me very much: (a) have no sin: (b) have positive virtue; (c) have confidence in Me as in thy friend. Temptation must not approach thee, whether to choose the world or God. The world vanishes from the eyes of one who truly loves his God. I remain alone in thy heart. What a sublime doctrine this is: He who wishes to lead men to Jesus shall have a thrice-kindled love, otherwise he will not be suited for the great work of God. Otherwise, there is much failure and there are empty formalities!

(*b*) In Peter's soul this threefold question sounds strange. Does the Master doubt, or merely encourage? Does not He allude to the threefold denial? What a painful remembrance mixed with so much honey. O Lord, I love Thee; I trust, I believe that I love Thee. O Lord, Thou knowest everything and I cannot see into the future, but I cling to Thee anxiously and enthusiastically! O my Lord, dost Thou allow me to say that I love Thee? I will take care, I will be vigilant and pray! Since Maundy Thursday I have experienced much; I have learned by experience to my benefit. I have to love Thee, and I do love Thee.

(*c*) "*He saith unto him: Feed my lambs . . . my sheep.*" I make thee shepherd, I make thee king. Thy kingdom is power, for it tends and sacrifices and serves because it loves. I do not make thee lord but shepherd. Many are those who have gone astray; go after them in the desert! Many are the downfalls, the scandals; go, work "*in solicitudine*," do so anxiously, but from thy *temperament* the joy which resides in the depths of the Good Shepherd's heart shall not be missing. Who loves cannot have a dark, overclouded soul: even if he weeps, his tears gush forth from sweet depths. Love men actively, love as they desire to be loved. Thy love for thy flock will be weak and faltering if thou only commandest and dost not act. Take part in life with thy whole heart: thou wilt come upon My traces. Strongly leads the one who goes in front in a way that he draws as well as helps, and also encourages.

JESUS FORETELLS PETER'S DEATH

"*Amen, amen, I say to thee: when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had said this, he saith to him: Follow me. Peter turning about, saw that disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned on his breast at supper . . . he saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith to him: So I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me.*" (*John* xxi. 18-22.)

(*a*) Peter, again I say unto thee: Follow Me. Three years ago I also said the same to thee: Follow Me, I lead thee. Leave the silent shores of thy native lake and follow Me ardently and enthusiastically. And thou hast followed Me; thou canst not say that I led thee upon cruel ways and that My love has not compensated thee for thy net and hut. But now I specially emphasize that thou shalt follow Me also when the sweet love which asserts itself departs from thee and when I place thee upon harder and more difficult ways. Be true to Me then too. Peter did not comprehend this very well. Rome and the Janiculum where his cross will stand were unknown to him. If this mysterious call had not resounded in his soul with such extraordinary strength he would have finished his life far from the turmoil of the world in the idyllic seclusion of sweet Nature, in a quiet fisher hut. But this call has wrenched him out and placed him on the way of war, before the terrible death which nailed the despised, obscure Jew on to an upturned cross.

Haughty Rome crushed him, but his death carried away with it the colossus of the imperium. Let us cling to Jesus with anxious faithfulness, wherever He leads us, and if perceptible consolation is sometimes missing, no matter. Our watchword is : Absolute faithfulness.

(*b*) Easy is that renunciation which man imposes upon himself in the heat of ardour and zeal ; but much more difficult is that which others bestow on us. In our daily life a million difficulties stand in our way ; they hurt our most holy feelings ; our heart bleeds ; scepticism, immorality, faithlessness surround and torture us. This is a cross upon which we do not crucify ourselves but others crucify us. To bear this is difficult but very necessary. Let us take this as a cross, which we meet with the great soul of Jesus and with His sublime consciousness. We bring light into this darkness, we place our beautiful soul into this frozen, distorted world ; this is our strife and our Christ-like victory.

(*c*) And what shall John do ? is what Peter asks. Do not let us care about what will happen to this or that one. Do not let us say : Why dost Thou prepare a cross for me and not for him ; why should I get to the Janiculum and not he ? Let us honour the designs God has for us and be faithful unto death. Is it not sufficient for us to know that this is our way according to the will of God ? Are ye scandalised that God has many ways and that it is sufficient for faith to go its own way with the brightness and punctuality of the way of the stars ? Oh yes, my way! my star! Through whatever cold and dark zones we pass we will endeavour to accomplish our way with the light and the faithfulness of the way of the stars. Oh, let our life be even in the January night a shining starry way!

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES ON A MOUNTAIN

" *And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto that mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*" (*Matt.* xxviii. 16.)

(*a*) And not only the eleven but many with them. The "*Ecclesia*" troops up to the mountain, perhaps on to Mount Tabor, the mount of the transfigured Christ, the mount of the tents of reassurance. What a procession; bright sun, flowery forest, perfumed breeze Where would we not go up to see the Lord? "And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted." . . . They were not placed into the zone of great emotions and feelings; they walked on the mountain but in their human heaviness they remained dwarfs even up there and did not reach up to the great Christ. Oh, inner world, thy heights may be in me even if I languish in the plain, I can be a desert in rich surroundings, and darkness in sunshine. I wish to shape myself so that I may be high, noble, sunny, and Christ-like. I trust that I may become that whatever the place or the hour.

(*b*) " *At length he appeared to the eleven. . . . And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (*Mark* xvi. 14.) We rejoice in the power of Christ. We have a strong Saviour under whose feet the world dwindles. The devil also promised Him power upon the mountain; but what a different power this is which conquered the world. And Jesus did not use this power for revenge, He did not crush anyone, only death and sin. It is this power of His He now gives to His disciples: to wipe out sin, to reform man, to lessen the weight of the world, to open heaven. Ye are able to do all this: go with this consciousness into the world, with the spirit of world-victory. Go. Ye have to conquer the world because ye can do so. It is my will, I send you upon this mission with bliss-giving power. With this frame of mind has the Apostle, and every disciple, to go forth.

(*c*) "*He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.*" (*Mark* xvi. 16.) Let us bring it well to our consciousness what a duty faith is. Christ Himself died for having proclaimed to the high priest the fact that He was the Son of God. The martyrs all bleed for faith; others are fettered beside St. Paul. Entire Christianity is a proof of faith! What a terrible delusion and heresy it is to tear away morals from faith, from its root. Its flower droops. What a desolate idea to live without faith, therefore without God! How are those to be strong and noble-minded who cannot clasp God the all-beautiful and all-good with the faith of revelation? My task is to believe, to be baptised, that is, to be reborn, to live from faith, and obtain salvation. To be "reborn," what a strong expression! Divine life points to deep strength, and what a sweet encouraging fact it is that we can live divine, bliss-giving life. To live with new life, new joy, to speak a new tongue, to sing a new song.

I AM WITH YOU TO THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD. I

"*And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*" (*Matt.* xxviii. 20.)

(*a*) Jesus is our strength and content; His victory, redemption, grace, truth, idealism, and Church is our all. We do not count without Him. That is why He wants to be amongst us, with us, and in us. Even if He has left us in His human form, His strength is our spirit and life. But in this consciousness we have to be noble-minded; the "God-with-us" is strength as well as a good disposition. The knowledge that Jesus is with us is our greatest consolation. We walk lightly even in the unbelieving, cold world if we carry our God in our heart. "I am with thee"—he says to Moses when He sends him to the Pharaoh, to Isaiah and Jeremiah, when He sends them to the Jewish people. Therefore do not fear. "The Lord is with thee"—says the angel to the Holy Virgin as encouragement and consolation. He is also with me. With me also; I am not forlorn, not banished!

(*b*) In what way is He with us? (1) As the original cause and aim of everything, who creates, sustains, and also wishes to make us happy; (2) He is with us with His grace; (3) He is with us in His Church, in the gifts of His infallibility and sanctity; (4) Especially in the institutions of the highest teaching authority and that of the Holy Eucharist. O my soul, rejoice; for the Lord is present with all His revelations; His individuality, spirit, teaching, love, and grace are all thine. How we ought to give thanks for this and rest deliciously content in it! How we ought to love the Church, its teaching and Sacraments, and use them to our benefit! We cannot lose our way, and waste away; we live in His house, sit at His table, and become filled with Him.

(*c*) "*To the consummation of the world . . .*" Whether the end of the world is near or far; whether 10 days or 1920 years separate us from it, He is always with us. What concerns us is that He should be with us till the end of "our world," at the hour of our death. And He will be with us, if we also are with Him, if we guard a faithful remembrance of Him. Let us think often of God but not as an onlooker who ascertains that God exists, but as His loving soul which clings to Him. We wish to be attached and not only to think; we wish to rejoice in Him and live for Him with joy! Him we breathe; we open our mouth, throw open our soul, and inhale Him. He is our air, our element, and light and we rejoice in this and so shall this be all along; not one minute without Him, not one minute without the state of grace.

I AM WITH YOU TO THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD. II

"*And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*" (*Matt.* xxviii. 20.)

(*a*) This is our inexpressible consolation. In everything and everywhere we wish to associate with Him intently and directly. We feel His presence; His breath seems to touch us; it follows us as a bright shadow whether we walk upon a carpet, shavings, or unbroken soil. His words resound in our ears; flowers, song of birds, dawn, sunset, the peal of bells, and the ideas passing through our soul remind us of them. We speak to Him, take His orders, visit Him in the Sacrament of the Altar. We have our bliss managed by His servants ; in Confession we sprinkle our soul with His blood; in Holy Communion we enjoy the love and warmth of union. All this faith proclaims to us : Christ is here. Our every consolation is : Christ is here. Elsewhere it is dark and cold ; on us shines the eye and soul of Christ. Elsewhere there are bare churches, dusty Bibles, empty altars ; with us there is not only His House, but He Himself in the House. The world is full of God, of His ideas, works, and strength ; everything is filled and saturated with Christ. His cause, aim, glory, Sacraments, and Church . . . are our all.

(*b*) This is our inexpressible strength ; it pervades our mind and will. His feelings and longings are felt in us. Who hands himself over to Him experiences and feels the spring in himself. The more susceptible and respectful such a soul is, the more sweetly and voluntarily Christ's ideas and feelings develop in it. Storms and strife, peace and war, success and failure alternate in such a soul also, but its faithfulness, attachment, zeal, and reverence for God help it over all these obstacles. Jesus is our quiet, deep, persevering strength. Followers and believers,we are able to persevere through Him even in our depression ; we are able to wait for the sun even in the night.

(*c*) This is our inexpressible enthusiasm. For Jesus' presence continually urges more intimate union and this union warms and purifies. We feel that henceforth nothing can part us from Christ, neither sword, suffering, nor life and death ; sin seems a violent murder of the soul, it seems suicide. Jesus' presence shapes our quarrelsome, one-sided, cold, and subjective nature which does not understand others and does not appreciate them ; and we begin to rejoice in having loving thoughts for others and in being polite, cheerful, warm, noble-spirited. "Unto you that fear my name the sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings." (*Mal.* iv. 2.)

THE ASCENSION

" *And he led them out as far as Bethania : and lifting up his hands he blessed them.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 50.)

(*a*) He led them to many places, finally He leads them out to Bethany, up to the Mount of Olives. It is spring, the air is sunny and perfumed, the earth is flowery, and Jesus passes along the road of olive trees with the strength and joy of eternal life. His heart is full ; His soul spreads its wings as the wandering bird, and lifting up His hands He blesses His dear followers with the blessing of the eternal High-priest and Saviour. He again whispers : " O Holy Father, keep them in Thy name," in Thy strength and grace. " Father, the hour has come, glorify Thy Son. I do not ask of Thee to take them from the world but to save them from evil. Bless them in righteousness. Let Me be in them, as Thou art in Me ; I wish that where I am they also shall be with Me." Jesus blessed His Church ; we receive this blessing if we remain in His House. This is an effective, strong blessing ; it is the victory of the conquering soul of Jesus.

(*b*) " *And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them, and was carried up to heaven.*" He disappeared in a shining cloud. This ascent was visible for a time and then the glorified Christ vanished with the speed of thought. To Him space is no barrier, no fetter.

This ascent of Jesus is a great, crying sign, a great sign-post which points to heaven. Follow Me on the narrow way, upon the steep paths but in the strength of the spirit, and all those follow Him who long "*ad æternitatem.*" *Excelsior* . . . let us rise in faith, hope, and purity of heart. The mountains draw and lift us . . . the abysses draw and the ocean draws; and how intensely this sublime Ascension draws us on!

(*c*) It is a sign-post to our native country. The melancholy Thomas said to Christ at the Last Supper: "Lord, we do not know whither Thou goest." The view of the future, the sorrowful view without the Master, filled his soul. He did not understand the Lord: "There are many places in the house of my Father, I go to prepare a place for you." I go home. But now Thomas sees that the Lord goes home into the "other world"; he now believes that "I will return again and take thee with me." Now the view of the future is no more cloudy. I will be with Christ, I will be at home and He is my way. I am not a dark soul gone astray which has no home. I am a pilgrim but not "being foreign to joy"; moreover my hope is full of immortality. We correct the self-renouncing words of Thomas who says: "Let us also depart so as to be able to die with Him"; we say, let us go to live with Him!

MEANING OF THE ASCENSION

What is the spiritual and emotional background of the rising up into heaven?

(*a*) It is a victorious entry into that land where He is King; into the kingdom of strength, virtue, beauty, entry into the kingdom of souls. On earth only the earthly roads meander; the church is not finished, the work only proceeds upon the building site; instead of a museum we only see a studio where there is much labour and delay! Here the roots of life sink into the damp earth, there the flowers pour forth their perfume in the light of God. The reign of Christ here is only being shaped, here there is strife, there victory. The way of Christ leads past ravaged battlefield and ruined city, the place of the fallen angels. "At last thou hast conquered!" This is what the battlefield and ruins breathe. From the battlefield the ploughing field of Easter furrows is being made. From the ruins the new part of the "*cœlestis Urbs*" is being built. Let us work, strive, and build here below. We also will conquer!

(*b*) The Lord comes to the eternal gates and they open; "But Christ being come an high-priest of the good things to come . . . by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption." (*Heb.* ix. 11.) There He presented His work at all times, there He assured its success and blessing. Let us trust in this conquest! "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens." (*Heb.* viii. 1.) This shall inspire us to attachment and faithfulness. We belong to Him; His strength renders us capable of it and descends into us from the highest heaven so as to lift us. The drops of His blood will be scattered upon us as fiery tongues. His breath will change to a roaring storm. We have to be strong!

(*c*) The next world is an entirely different world to this. The forest is different from the ocean; the song of the lark is different from the notes on paper. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard"; from what the eyes see and the ears hear one cannot build up that "other" world; it is a transcendental world. We have to lift our ideas out of the category of colours, sounds, and flesh; we have to lift our aims out of the sensual sphere! What an awakening death will bring us! What a meeting with Christ! When existence will be transformed and the soul will be imbued with new life, new ideas, new visions, new feeling; when divine depths will open in it so that fresh, lively streams of the ocean of strength and joy gush forth from it. "How great is the house of God and how enormous His possessions."

CHRIST DEPARTED INTO ANOTHER WORLD. I

"*And was carried up to heaven.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 51.)

(*a*) "God is ascended with a jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet! Sing praises to our God, sing praises to our King." (*Psalms* xlvi. 6.) As the lark flies up singing from the fields bathed in dew and scent and as it drinks in the sunshine and pours out its soul in its song; so my soul also flies up with it "*in dulci jubilo*," stunned by the silence and beauty of the country in May. This also is ascension. But the sweet, victorious soul of Christ has the most sublime Ascension! He has lived through many "*excessus*" of His passionate, vigorous, divine life, the "*beata passio*," and the Resurrection, and now He lives through the "*gloriosa ascensio*." In suffering humility feasts, in resurrection strength; the ascent into heaven was the feast of sweet joy. The song of Jesus sings "*juxta dies juventutis suæ*." He sings the song of eternal youth and the earth answers Him: "*Jubilate Deo omnis terra*"; let us also sing the psalm of zeal, joy, longing, and depth. The angel-world descends to meet Him, the world of soaring souls . . . as if the whole heavens would change to two great wings upon which eternal love descends to accept its Son. Once upon a time the silent night and the vigilant love of the Holy Virgin awaited Him in Bethlehem, now the sunny glorious Heaven receives Him. Here also the "*gloria, laus et honor*" resounds.

(*b*) This triumphal procession leads under triumphal arches which are shaped from angel wings. "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." (*Psalms* xxiii. 7.) He arrived at the throne of God, who placed Him on His right, that is, gave Him glory and power, gave Him "a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief." (*Isaiah* lxi. 3.) "He gave Him a name which is above all names," He wished Him to be "the King of kings and the Lord of lords!" And although He is such He does not forget this small planet: *Terra*; there is His home, there His cradle rocked, His Mother is still there, He brought His remembrances from there, He will never forget the ground, the earth soaked with His blood; neither will He forget me.

(*c*) In the tracks of this triumphal procession the way is open to eternal happiness. It was difficult to open this way, this is a heavier way than that of the Behring Sea or the Straits of Magellan, it is a way on the oceans of eternity. He captures the city, the "*cælestis Urbs*," and "He shall build the places that have been waste and shall raise up ancient ruins, and shall repair the desolate cities." (*Isaiah* lxi. 4.) And He hoists His sign, the Holy Cross upon the sky; that is where He places His stars, His holy wounds; these are the stars of eternal spring, their shining light is the dawn of our hopes; and He emits fire from heaven, Pentecost fire, the warmth and heat of souls. Oh, my glorious King, how joyous I am that Thou existeth, that Thou art mighty, happy and glorious. This is one of the holy joys of my happiness!

CHRIST DEPARTED INTO ANOTHER WORLD. II

The Lord ascended; the rays of His glory and the radiant glances of the enchanted souls indicate His way. He ascended and took our heart away and filled our heart with deep, passionate longing: let us follow Him. Let us go into the "*regnum Dei.*"

(*a*) Jesus wishes it; He set man upright and directed his glance towards heaven: "*Ad astra!*" He took us up on to the mountain; started the flood of progress and rendered us capable of creating a more beautiful and more developed world both technically and as regards the enjoyment of rights and goods. He made men out of us and awoke us to the consciousness of the dignity of the sons of God. What a glorious, sublime height! Wonderful, ideal ambition! He the Master of eternal life and resurrection leads the "*ascensio.*" Who makes his way after Him is not satisfied with the knowledge of how the rivers flow and how the winds and stars proceed. Other longings break forth from the depth of our soul, other aims, other ideals, and the earth becomes small for such "*qui ascendens super omnes cælos*"; greater than time, space, and nation will the last "*aspirans*" of immortality become, whether he lives in a cellar or attic room. This is not a mountain any more, but the heaven itself . . . in the heart of the true man? This is where everyone has to rise, to rise *up to heaven*, which he carries in himself.

(*b*) But there are such who point downward and say: The beautiful earth suffices us. This is a mistake; the earth is not beautiful without heaven. The world is constricted for us without the sky; progress, culture, and brotherhood fade without the sky, the heavens. We have to imbue culture with supernatural faith, which awakes childlike feelings and the fear of God. We cannot trust in other things. Rousseau says: "I do not believe that man can be virtuous without religion; I also have professed this erroneous belief for long, but have now become disillusioned from it." And we have to augment religion with the trust of the child and the devoted love of the Lord Jesus. In progress we have to tend fine morality and the love of purity . . . we have to honour the great institutions of the world, such as marriage, we have to see the unity of hearts in it; the love and happiness which reverence each other. Brotherliness can only be kept up as Christ-like brotherliness; selfishness, cruelty, and raffish pleasure-seeking is the poison of the tarantella spider; according to the story man becomes senseless from it and only answers to music. We have only harmony in the Christ-like love.

(*c*) And what is beyond progress and culture? There is "*ascensio*" in heroical, noble-minded virtue, in the sacrificial soul. The "*animalis homo*" does not attain thereto even if it cuts itself a way with the weight of the elephant; there eagle wings are needed, such as carried Dante into Paradise. What "*ascensio*" the virginal life, the Eucharist presents; how many sacrifices, what purity and selflessness! We have to glow and be enthusiastic for the "*ascensio*" and its only, unique, sweet Leader.

"SURSUM CORDA"

"*And while they were beholding him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments. Who also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up into heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven.*" (*Acts* i. 10.)

(*a*) How the Holy Virgin and the followers looked after Him! How we also still look after Him! If we see a shining cloud we think: Behold, the ark of Christ in the depth of heaven! Let us henceforth also look to heaven. Not pessimistic turning away from the world directs our glance, but eternal love. He came to us to direct our heart there. He reached His aim. We look indeed and also go towards Him; we continually seek Him. "Thou wouldst not seek me," says the Lord, "if I were not to some extent already in thee." True; His faith, image, memory, feelings, and grace are in us, and the more we look towards Him the more of Him there will be in us.

(*b*) We look up. Jesus willed us to have great, strong, longing for God, bliss, grace, and strength. We feel that the world sinks away from us and we stand out of time as the rock out of the desert. We stand out of space because we see its barriers. The world to us is like the cage to the eagle; the eagle also can see out of the cage, but cannot spread its wings, it needs other dimensions. Everything here below is small for us; that is why we long for external, beautiful life with the instinct of existence, life, and happiness. But this longing of ours makes us want to render our life here more noble, and imbue it with the strength and beauty of eternal life; it lives and experiences the freshness of conviction and the directness of practice. We have to experience and live the divine, warm, ardent life here and now; this is the eternal life which we will continue in the other world.

(*c*) We look up, for this triumphal procession is joy and consolation to us. How great and strong this Christ is under whose feet glory disperses and the world diminishes to a speck. How He looks back from here on to the mount of temptation where He heard the words: All this I give Thee, if Thou adorest me! . . . How He feels the infamous lie! He looks back upon the mount of happiness which He now enjoys to the full. He looks back upon Tabor . . . and Golgotha! "*Montes Dei*," but above the hills and peaks the hill of the Ascension is His Mount, the mount of His glory and joy, and we also stand upon this mount, for there we are great and the world will be small in our eyes. But we go down and work and strive in the desert. One glance at the Mount of Glory raises us; from its heights the encouraging breath of eternal life touches us.

CHRIST DEPARTED INTO ANOTHER WORLD. III

Christ departed into another world.

(*a*) Into another world, quite another one. Man is the offspring of the earth, his world is this earth and this astral system; his senses are the impressions of this world; his notions are coloured by sentiments, instincts and moods. He is the exponent of this world, its function and quivering foliage. He speaks the tongue of this world, comprehends its feelings, claims and hopes. But there is also another world. When we are torn out of the category of our sensuousness and the earthly globe and stars are lost in mist; when the movement of the ether no longer creates colour and when sound no longer strikes our ear; when reality and comprehensibility presents itself in deep, divine light: then we will get to know that other world. What a sight this will be, what contemplation! What a flowering of life and sovereignty higher than the world. The new energies of our soul will awaken in this new spring of existence! As the wonderful world of consciousness develops in the child: so the deep worlds of eternal life unfold themselves in the departed soul.

(*b*) "*In the house of my Father there are many mansions.*" Our city and house are where we are at home; we have grown accustomed to them. Stepping beyond the boundaries of material existence, we will have another house, other notions, other longings and another taste. We penetrate through existence, and are absorbed in its greatness and beauty, and we will view God Himself and His creation. Every blade of grass and leaf will transport us to ecstasy, for they will be full of God, and the master work of His hand. Beyond the earth the many stars are "*mansiones multæ.*" Man now only guesses at these creations; then he will enjoy them. From our earth we look up to the floating islands of the souls.

(*c*) What a mystery our soul is, just like the perennial root in the winter waste or the pip in the winter apple! We are a captured spiritual world which will one day be freed and united to an immortal, beautiful life with its colours and light, with the harmony of its lines and with its charm. It is also true in this sense, that our soul is a hidden treasure and an unknown pearl. When will I come, when will I step before Thee, O my God? When wilt Thou start this wonderful metamorphosis in me? Come, Lord Jesus. We will work hard, that the earth may not ruin the heaven in us!

"STAY YOU." I

" *But stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high.*" (*Luke* xxiv. 49.)

(*a*) Sit down in the holy solitude and the words of the Prophet will be fulfilled in you: " He will sit by himself and be silent and he will rise above himself." And whilst he sits and is silent he folds his hands to prayer, and lifts his eyes to heaven and becomes an "*orante.*" The Ecclesia is "*orante.*" It is from this oratory that the praying, longing, soaring souls, let us say saints, come, who pray, for they long to get back to God, they weep to get back; they are from out of Him; they carry the instinct of eternity with them, and the ideas of infinity; the sense of deity is in them. As the ducks hatched by the hen do not listen to the anxious voice of their mother, but start out for the water and swim: so the souls entwined in the bond of flesh and blood and attached to time and space, those in whom the " soul" writhes, those start out for the Ocean, for God, and are absorbed in His adoration, praise and love.

(*b*) Besides, let us feel that we are hampered beings depending on others. We receive impressions from everywhere, we bathe in waves and these develop us.

We do not develop through seclusion but through union. . . . The richness of existence can develop to a beautiful world in the natural order just as in the supernatural. Yes, man is not ready at all . . . he is weak and frail and the feeling of insufficiency also changes us, but to prayer. In vain they say: What do ye pray for? God knows what ye are in need of. Oh, get ye gone, indifferent souls! Of course He knows our need, but we also know it for we feel that He gave us a longing, developing soul, which has to soar; He gave us a heart to be filled; heart to be enflamed; and wings that they should spread. Ideals burn into our soul, what else can we do than to run and strive for them? Oh yes, I have my God and I am not God; I do not possess all; I long for more, for the better; for that I have to beg; I have to be absorbed, to meditate, pray and think and long: O my God, help me! "My nature is spiritual but not divine" (*Plato*). I feel that the infiniteness of my consciousness demands divine help!

(*c*) We have to pray; this is the rule of the development of our soul, this is its requirement and instinct. For it awakens ideas, feelings, and passions and then it is in this warm, spiritual world that ideas develop into deep convictions; in this warm intimacy the emotions deepen to passion and become unconquerable energies; prayer is the natural element of souls, there they grow to be great, whereas those who do not pray become weak, for they do not approach God; and they cannot develop the strength they received. That is why it is said with such deep meaning that the rise and development of the soul keeps pace with prayer. We have to pray in a manner that our soul should breathe and fill itself with God!

"STAY YOU." II

"*But stay you in the city . . .*" (*Luke* xxiv. 49.)

(*a*) Sit down . . . calm down; let there be deep silence in your soul. Life is turmoil and a fair, and the soul does not descend to these profane, noisy market-places; therefore we beg for silence. Silence for the earthly, restless, flitting ideas which torture themselves; silence and peace in the continual quarrel; in the false comedy which is false because it is insincere, in this swaggering comedy filled with simulation and baseness as well as with cowardice. Not to be afraid, not to worry and fret but to collect oneself and go to God prudently, humbly and with trust. Ideas and emotions overrun our soul, and we suffer from the continual disorder.

Therefore I pray thee sit; look into thy heart and ask: What is it that removes me from the soul? What disturbs my peace? Desire of the flesh, sensuality, undisciplined, fickle disposition, vain fretting, mistrusting fear? Sit down and think and pray; "acquire a heart of good advice: nothing is more faithful to thee."

(*b*) "*Till you be endued with power.*" Look how God clothes: He clothes the field in beauty, the spring in flowers, the earth in light and sunshine and does so gorgeously, for the glory of Solomon pales before the beauty of the cornflower. He is predestined to clothe souls, and in what? No more in the whiteness of the lily, not in the fairness of the corn, not in the charm of the cornflower, but in Himself. God resides in us if we are in a state of grace, and it is His beauty, that spiritual beauty and transparency, depth and sweetness which is reflected on me. This cannot be compared to any formality and outwardness and charm, this we call grace. Grace is the beauty of God and its reflection on the soul, it is resembling to God and is the transfiguration with Him. Virtue is the bringing to consciousness of this beauty and transfiguration, it is its conscious experiencing.

(*c*) Eliseus received the cloak of Elias, he clothed himself in it and came across the Jordan as prophet. We also seek for the cloak of Elias to prepare ourselves to become prophets, apostolic, ardent souls; and Jesus says: I will clothe thee with . . . strength, endue thee with power. The strength of the Saints is their spiritual world. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience." "And putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge according to the image of him that created him." (*Colossians* iii. 12, 10.) Glowing, shining souls are wanted; *indutus lumine sicut vestimento*, who are clothed in light.

THE SPIRIT. I

The Lord Jesus' connection with the Holy Ghost kindles deep zeal in us.

(*a*) The Lord awaits everything from Him; He often promises the Holy Ghost, attaches great hopes to Him and awaits specially effective results from Him. "When the Comforter will come, whom I send from the Father, the soul of truth . . . " From that your hearts will melt and ye will be drawn to me. Now ye do not believe, ye will then believe. . . . Ye do not comprehend me now, ye will understand me then. Attachment, light, readiness walk in His tracks. Therefore I pray that God shall send His Spirit into your hearts. Every good father, mother, and teacher shall pray for their own ones that God should send down His Spirit, that the words should awaken emotion. The Lord encourages and emboldens, saying that everything will be different when the Holy Ghost descends. He will teach us to pray. . . . This good ardent Spirit is the spirit of zeal.

(*b*) The Lord entrusts His work to the Holy Ghost. He wishes for sinless souls but the greatest reasoning for avoiding sin is: "*Nolite contristare Spiritum*," do not sadden the Spirit. He wishes for renunciation; "*nescitis quid petatis*," the Holy Ghost will pray in you. He wishes for virginal souls; He expects that when the heart is "the temple of the Holy Spirit." He wishes for ardent, apostolic souls, who will speak in a manner, "as the Spirit will give them speech." There is no greater punishment than the departure and drawing back of the Holy Spirit: "My spirit does not remain in man for he is flesh." Therefore the Lord has a care to send the Spirit: whom I send you, who is out of me, who is the ardent breath of my heart; ye cannot go to Him, but I will send Him, He will come from the height.

(*c*) Therefore we turn to the Holy Ghost with the same love with which we cling to Christ. The Master has gone but in His stead the Holy Spirit is here. Christ has departed, but the Holy Ghost is our support. This feeling and this longing filled the *cœnaculum*. The disciples expected and awaited everything from Him. How highly we have to value the Spirit; we are not allowed to do anything that renders Him sad, alienates Him and drives Him away; we would act against the intentions of

Christ. The work of Christ does not prosper because the Holy Ghost is not in us. Let us take care of Him as we take care of a reliably burning light amidst a roaring, dark storm, take care of Him as of the Light of our eye and the Soul of our soul. We get nearer to Christ in proportion as we highly value, love and comprehend the Holy Ghost, and we become finally torn away from Christ Himself if we sin against the Holy Ghost, that is, if we are indifferent towards faith, hope, love, bliss, and eternal life.

THE SPIRIT. II

"*Veni Sancte Spiritus.*"

(*a*) We await the good spirit. The good spirit is the Holy Spirit and God gives that as a great grace. "God gives a good spirit to those who ask him." Everyone wishes for a good spirit, the world also; spirit which shall be able to find its way in the strifes of life. How much the good spirit means, that good, believing spirit which opens its eyes to the light of faith; the anxious soul, which trembles for its bliss and salvation; the soul which is conscientious in the fulfilling of the great tasks of life! If we have a good, bright soul then our life is starlight and sunshine, but when our soul is overshadowed then our whole world is cloudy, annoying and tedious. What did it help Saul that he had kingly robes when he did not have a good soul to them, when an evil, sad spirit possessed him and excited him to anger? Jesus appeared to St. Catherine and took out her heart and exchanged it with His heart. This is what the Holy Ghost also does with our soul. Our soul is the soul of prejudice, lovelessness, denial and cowardice and the

Holy Ghost gives a good soul, a good spirit, instead of this one. That is why the Church sings so entreatingly and loudly: *Veni Sancte Spiritus!* . . .

(*b*) *Veni Creator Spiritus.* The Holy Ghost is a force which creates and to us He also gives a creative spirit which wills well and strongly. This is what we are in need of. Without strong spirit and knowledge of the soul, culture and position are of no good. We have also to hold the sword tight otherwise its blade is of no use! All the holiness and objects of grace of the Church are only of use to us if we hold and receive them with strong ardour, if our soul is stong and inflexible. Come therefore, Holy Ghost! In us the spirit will also be strong if we open wide doors to the Holy Ghost, if we trust Him and continually improve ourselves. His Spirit will be the enthusiasm which the feeling of strength awakens. Enthusiastic men are wanted, for only ardent, enthusiastic men are capable of deeds. The character of St. Francis directed the life of the XIIth century that it should not fall into the abyss; we will also be able to save much if there is spirit in us. Oh, create spirit in us, Thou creating Spirit; I am annihilated before Thee, for the Creator created me out of nothing. I humiliate myself and beseech Thee!

A MIGHTY WIND

"*And when the days of the pentecost were accomplished . . . suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*" (*Acts* ii. 1.)

(*a*) After long waiting Pentecost was come! Oh, to the expectant hearts the ten days were like eternity!

On the Mount of Sinai God once made His testament with His people on this day; at this time, therefore, was the feast of the law to be feared, on which strictness and servility were felt rather than love and liberty. Under the Mount of Sinai the people awoke to the consciousness of the sublime God's reign. The people were stubborn, therefore the law became a burden upon their neck. But now there came another Pentecost: love, ardour, enthusiasm, and joy fills the heart. The soul is united with the Holy Spirit in love; it is able to be enthusiastic and to melt; to overflow and become a martyr. Oh, Pentecost of Pentecosts; sweet, ardent birthday of willingness, morality and love! Thou art the feast of my soul!

(*b*) "*As of a mighty wind.*" The spirit of life came rushing from heaven . . . it buzzed, warned, awakened and quietened; this was the sound of bells of Pentecost! It pervaded every corner, shook the houses of the Pharisees and the Roman prætorium; and it specially pervaded that enclosed grove which was the gathering-place of the apostolic souls; it moved every tree and branch in it, every twig and leaf; it made every sprout to open, and awoke all energies; He breathed spirituality and freedom and He warmed and enlarged the inner world; this is His world, the world of consciousness, feelings and motives. Outwardly, He only becomes evident in regulating the general and common circumstances and in creating institutions. How deep and great is the inner world opposite this! Let us will well, nobly, virtuously, beautifully, sublimely, reverently, purely, bashfully, disciplinedly, patiently, bravely, perseveringly, humbly, courteously, devoutly, rejoicingly and trustingly; this is our world.

(*c*) "*It filled the whole house . . .*" This house is the Church; this is where the Spirit was drawn to. As the dove of Noah did not alight on to carcass, ruins and logs, but on to the bark: so the Holy Ghost descended on to the Church; this also is an ark in the flood. The dove also descended upon Christ, the beloved Son of God in baptism; now He descends upon the assembly of the believers, upon the Church baptised with fire. Here He may descend indeed; every soul intensely expects Him; not a lonely tree but a whole forest in spring-pomp calls and calls Him. He also descends upon a dry twig, a sinful soul, that by the clap of His wings He might awake them; He has descended upon lonely trees, the Saints of the Old Testament; but a nest He only builds in the forest in the unity of the souls, that is where He is at home, there He cooes, and loves. Let us rejoice for this dove of the Church, for this sweet visitor.

THE HOLY GHOST

"*And when the days of the pentecost were accomplished . . . suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*" (*Acts* ii. 1.)

The Holy Ghost descended sublimely and uniquely upon the Apostolic Church. He has also descended before; He descended on Mount Sinai . . . He came down as drifting fog upon the Ark of the Covenant . . . He descended for the consecration of Solomon's Temple; but now He did not seek for the Ark of the Covenant, not for granite-rocks and temple, but for souls; His lightning changed to holy fire, His drifting fog to the smoke of the incense of prayer and He repeated the old word: Let us create man . . . man, to the likeness of God. What is that like?

(*a*) The type of spiritual beauty. This is what Prophets and Apostles, Saints and followers look for and look at; this is what they speak, and paint and carve; it is upon this that the Apostolic Church works: the virtuous, cultivated, pure beauty of the soul. In Athens lovely statues stood everywhere so that the taste of the people should become refined: in Christianity the Museums of spiritual beauty open; the works of Art stand on the pedestals of the Altars; those we look at, wonder and reverence. The first one is the Holy Virgin, the loveliest princess and Mother of God; on her visage the snow of virginity and on Her breast the Infant. She is not a painted beauty; but "*flos agri et lilium convallium*"; she is not a cold beauty, she loves a child; though she has a crown of stars, she loves in the house of Nazareth; sun surrounds her, but she can weep and goes homeward upon the Way of the Cross. . . . And the others are all like this; they are her sons; they resemble her. I am also her son; the beauty of my soul is her mother mark; only that indeed!

(*b*) The divine man is the type of strength, the expression of that unbreakable, straight, natural strength which is hidden in virtue. Not the strength of the muscles and athleticism; not the strength of violence and passionateness; all this is merely flesh and caprice; but the strength of that quiet, simple, harmonious, divine feeling. Sympathy with God! This may be found in the child, in the maiden. . . . This enters our heart with the love of God's law and grows great in us in the measure that we are able to bring sacrifice and deny ourselves. In this love the soul becomes simple, fit for life, practical and lovable; it ennobles its surroundings and asserts itself everywhere, at home, at the fire-side, at the sick-bed, in society, at the coffin. And how great its strength is when it looks up to a raging one with a child-like face and when it begins to sing in the chaos of the world! . . . Let us trust in the strength of the Gospel-like feelings. . . . Let us often read the Gospel and allow its spirit to reflect upon our soul; it will be like the dew after midnight upon the dry grass. Under the leather apron of St. Joseph and the kitchen apron of the Holy Virgin such feelings lived.

(*c*) The divine man is the type of soul filled with God, which has a sense for the depth; sense for God and grace. Many look upon them with the fatigue of the "fin de siècle," or with the impertinent recklessness of frivolity; but depth remains depth; it is from depth that metaphysics and the other world arise. Such a one has a sense for the purity of life from which joy, merriness and good humour arise. The world is sad; sooner or later emptiness shows upon it in the shape of sadness. A classical example for this is paganism with its bright programme of life and beautiful goddesses who were unable to make the earth smile. Oh, how good for us that we are able to look upon earth with the consciousness of the pure heart and to look to heaven with the enthusiasm of eternal hope.

POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

"*And it sat upon everyone of them.*" (*Acts* ii. 3.)

(*a*) He gave His Apostles first of all the spiritual gift of infallibility, so that they should not teach faulty things;

He filled them with depth, faith and devotion, so that those who teach infallible doctrine, those should also experience and live the doctrine. The most important criterion of the doctrine is the fact. The fact is life. The infallible doctrine has to bring up saints and the teachers have to be saints. Life refutes doctrine; our own life does so; we are not apostles if we are not Saints, the living editions of doctrine! The apostles are baptised with fire and spirit! Oh, only those who live doctrine and faith thoroughly and experience it are the apostles.

(*b*) They had their mission, now He gave them strength for it! *Eritis mihi testes*, ye will be witnesses! Though ye are weak I expect a strong testimony of you. . . . *In signis et portentis*. . . . Ye will astound the world and the greatest lesson will be your sublime spirit; that wisdom which no one will resist. Only those have true, effective mission in whom soul resides.

(*c*) They had their jurisdiction, their legal effect; now He gave them grace for educating the souls. It is a great and difficult task to lead souls, who depend on the apostolic guidance and who become great in the apostolic institution; but on the other hand it is a great gift to be under sure, strong guidance and to feel in it so to say the hand and arm of God. This sure and strong guiding is our part in the Mother Church; one or the other leader of souls is the greatest blessing to many. Oh, let us cling to the Church, let us hang on to its sources and let us beg and seek for a strong, enlightened leader whom we can then follow trustingly and with a great heart. This is also what the Holy Ghost wishes; He tends nobly developing souls; He looks upon His Church as upon a flowery garden upon which He spreads sunshine and beauty. "*Omnia propter electos*," He does everything for His chosen ones, His elect. One of the signs of this electing is the deep conscientious attachment to the Church.

TONGUES OF FIRE. I

"*And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire.*" (*Acts* ii. 3.)

(*a*). The Spirit baptises the disciples to Apostles. Jesus has a great conception of the Apostles; who are not born from blood and bones but of the Holy Ghost. Jesus has already baptised Simon Peter, Andrew, and the others; He brought them up in His school but did not give them the qualification in His earthly life; that He sent from heaven; this was that "*virtus ex alto*." He plunged their soul in *fire and light* and they truly became seeing; He pervaded them with fire and not with water, with fire which took out the dregs of earthly feelings; which soldered them to that Christ—(*eritis mihi testes*); He gave them souls which forgot to be afraid—(*Non timebis a facie eorum*) and gave them strength, stone-hard strength—(*dabo tibi frontem siliceam*). Their heart was alight and spread warmth, and from this warmth it became spring on earth; the root of the Church became verdant, its spirit rose forth and *History*, the real life of man began. And upon these souls pervaded with fire and light the Holy Ghost poured forth His own gifts: *deep love of God and Christ, infallible theology, a world mission* and with it *will and power*. O Holy Ghost, Thou baptisest well, Thou baptisest with fire and bearest fiery souls, and also humble, patient, beautiful, sweet souls. All "*vasa electionis*" come forth from Thy hand, Thou inspired, creative artist. *Veni Sancte Spiritus !*

(*b*) And where are the Apostles born ? In the *cœnaculum*, in the room of the Last Supper. They gathered together there where their sweetest remembrances, the echoes of Christ's high priestly prayers resounded, where the water stains of the washing of the feet still remained on the floor, where the spirit of Christ was still present. Here on this holy sweet place, on the most memorable scene of the outpourings of Jesus' heart. Here where everything caught them with such power and the memory of Jesus kindled their heart to flames. Here where the table of the Last Supper stood, that Altar upon which the Lord first presented His own mysteriously loving heart to God. Here where the "gratuitously given grace" could keep its greatest feast ! Here in this mysterious atmosphere that type appeared which was not Jew, not Roman, not Greek, but Christ-like, that is, apostolic ! Here the accent of the human voice resounded which is not a manly or womanly voice but the voice of truth, the accent of the angels, who are neither men nor women but spirits. Those possess the deepest inspirations of apostleship who live the life of the Eucharist. It is those who say : *Ecce ego, mitte me* . . . behold O Lord, here there is also a heart which comprehends Thee ; it comprehends Thee, for it lives from Thee.

(*c*) It is for this grace they prepared for ten days and prayed with united strength in the zealous warmth of their hearts. The strawberry and the peach absorb much warmth until that drop of oil from which they receive their flavour becomes clear in them, filters through them. The soul also needs much absorption and heating till it becomes sweet, fiery and flavoured. Although it sometimes ripens quickly, especially in a hot summer as that first Pentecost was; Paul also ripened quickly before the gate of Damascus from the bright light of Christ; otherwise the soul needs time until it becomes more ardent, more collected and purer.

TONGUES OF FIRE. II

"*And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire.*" (*Acts* ii. 3.)

(*a*) The Pentecost gift of the tongues indicates the same thing as the sight of the Good Shepherd: connection, union, endeavour and understanding of one another; it means ye are to go to the people, to speak their tongue to comprehend them and that they are to understand you. Truth and grace ye have; impart that to them, go after them. Do not stand aside saying: Christ promised that the gates of hell will not have power over us; not we are in need of the people, but the people are in need of us. This is not the tongue of Pentecost; this is not the tongue of the spirit which conquers; this is not the tongue of the soul which wishes to have life-giving and refreshing effect. Our principle is not "l'art pour l'art"; it is not seclusion so that only grains of the Gospel should fall to the world; but let it have the whole truth of Pentecost. To give, to give, to impart . . . this is Pentecost.

(*b*) "*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost* . . ." They were filled with the spirit of Christ; this spirit became their soul, and their world changed. We may say that genius gave rise to congenial men. This is wanted; we have to take up Christ's great ideas; we have to experience and live through the depth and strength of His motives and truly and individually to shape them in our individuality. Apostles are from the spirit; priests can only be souls congenial to apostles; congenial men; their soul is the Holy Ghost. This is the soul they have to receive in the ordination and to awake it, for it is in them by the "placing of the hands."

Let us believe that it is in them; but energy, absoption, and emotion is wanted for awakening it and developing its strength.

(*c*) But the Holy Ghost is meant for everybody and there are many in our days who long for Him. He is the soul of the Church. He educated Christianity to heroical life. In the Church every soul is directly connected with the Holy Ghost, it is the Holy Ghost which gives them life and refreshens them. This spirit has to pervade the entire life: view and will, speculation and action; and it has to reveal itself in a sweet sense for what is moral. Oh, come Thou wonderful, creating, shaping Spirit!

MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST

"*It filled the whole house*," the Church; He is now the leader, the educating, leading Spirit, the "*Spiritus rector*." He brings up inhabitants for Himself.

(*a*) Apostles; first He baptises the eleven, then Paul, and then on and on in their tracks continually apostolic men, the converters of the pagans, Bonifacius, Olaf, King Stephen, Adalbert, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver, St. Vincent, and those zealous ones in whose soul the longing burns: let us save the souls.

(*b*) He educates witnesses, witnesses of the blood, martyrs; St. Stephen, the purple diaconus, the first fruit of martyrdom, "whose face glows as the face of the angel," "who is full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." They stand in a row, with palm branches in their hand; "and we are witnesses of these things; and the Holy Ghost." (*Acts* v. 32.) What a lesson they and the Holy Ghost are, and what dignity and mission!

(*c*) He educates lily-like maidens with the Holy Virgin at their head, with "the temple of God, the shrine of the Holy Ghost" to lead them. Agnes, Cecilia, Catherine, Lucia, Agatha, and the lily does not fade; even after a thousand years it blossomed forth in Mechtilde and Gertrude, and later in Theresa, Magdalena of Pazzi, and Rose of Lima.

(*d*) He educates fine souls who are appropriate to receive the Lord and who become His organs and mediums. Even if there are no tongues of fire upon their heads, deep, glowing love burns in them as in St. Elizabeth, St. Vincent, St. Stanislaus, and St. Alphonsus!

(*e*) What a sublime house where we also live, where the Spirit educates us to purity, trust, and ardour. For this élite society only nobly-feeling and well-educated souls are fitting. That is why the Apostle writes: "These things write I to thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God." God gives strength for the pure ardent life and for correct consequent disciplining, for "the spirit of the Lord descends upon thee and thou changest to another man." We are in this House so that we should also become noble souls; God also wishes it and the Holy Ghost works for it.

LIGHT AND FIRE

The Holy Ghost is light and fire!

(*a*) He is the gift of the Lord; such an extraordinary, divine and unrivalled gift as only He can give; for example, He touches the blind and the blind see; He touches the coffin and the widow of Naim becomes a rejoicing mother, and that is how He now also does: He opens our eyes, "*illuminatos dat oculos cordis*," and the light shines in our eyes: we become seeing. We see the great ideas of God . . . they enter our soul and fill us, and light arises in our tracks. Before we stood in night, in lifeless dusk; everything was weak and without strength, the idea, the thought and hope. . . . At last "*in lumine tuo videmus lumen*," in His light we see. This force we experience with the change of the soul in ourselves and in world history. There are ideas which catch hold of the souls as natural forces; for example, the army of crusaders was seized by the charm of the Holy Land, the cross; the Church of the time of Augustine was seized by a reverence for the relics of St. Stephen; the XIV Century with the figure of St. Vincent; and at other times these ideas seem to be without force. At one time the souls catch fire from them and at others they are all "*caput languidem et cor mœrens*," tired heads, dull hearts surround them. "*In tenebris et umbra mortis.*" We sit in darkness and the shadow of death without Thee sweet, Holy Spirit; we degenerate and our glorious vocation sometimes appears before us as a dispersing mirage; we are like the degenerate race of the Inca which idled away its time in rags, smoking their pipes amongst the ruins of the palaces of their ancestors; they did not comprehend the genius, the soul which formerly fired their nation to enthusiasm. We wish to help ourselves and are full of reverence for the ideas of God; we willingly read the Holy Scripture down on our knees.

(*b*) The Holy Ghost augments great ideas to passions. The bare idea can never be great; great ideas are only those that we greatly love. If we do not love the ideas of God, they also will look small. Therefore we have to embrace the ideas of God with love. Man thinks of his parents, his betrothed, and his country with love; it is from this love that the woman becomes mother and betrothed, and the earth becomes the native land. Men can also think of foreign lands but they do not think of it with the love of the native land. Unbelievers, Jews and pagans can also think of the Lord Jesus, but with that thought which draws souls, links and attaches them to Him only the loving soul thinks of Him: "No one can come to me, if my Father does not call him." We can also love our soul; but different is the love of earthly life and different the anxious love which sees an immense treasure in the soul and guards the blood of Christ in it. We can delight in life and spring, but different is the joy of eternal life. In our thoughts we can swim above the abysses of mysterious existence; but that delight is different which is filled with the hope of immortality above the abysses of mysteries. It is proclaimed of Goethe that he was a harmonious soul, but the grave, suffering, eternal, longing for death and eternal life is not diffused in this harmony, and so this modest lark song is swallowed up by weeping storms. O Holy Ghost, Thou liftest us to festive, superior heights; in Thee nothing disturbs our joy: neither death, nor suffering, neither storm, nor night. Let us enjoy in ourselves the victory of the Holy Ghost-like soul.

(*c*) All this only the Spirit of God gives. Man can pray and long for it and who would not do so as the experience of the wise man encourages us: "I begged and the spirit of wisdom entered into me." Yes, indeed, we will pray for the sweet Spirit. The Lord also wishes Him for us and He also prays for us to possess Spirit. We will surely win Him. The poor haughty world cannot receive "the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." (*John* xiv. 17.) It disputes itself into darkness, and with all its mental energy creates doubt and night. It carries the spiritual world back into chaos from where the Spirit of God lifted it out just by creating light.

PENTECOST

"*And they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.*" (*Acts* ii. 4.)

Pentecost is the feast of deepest meaning, for although at every feast spirit and soul feasts, here the glowing fiery spirit emanates, here it starts out to conquer, shape and create . . . especially in the form of three *great graces*:

(*a*) The first one is *love*. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love and Pentecost is the most sublime revelation of love. It appears as infant love at Christmas, augments to suffering love on Golgotha, to glowing, conquering, victorious love at Pentecost . . . love which gives the best—*datum optimum*—the spiritual life and gives it the most effectively. Jesus breathed it—*insufflavit*—and it goes along the world in storming impulses; it kindles in Paul, Agnes, Perpetua, Theresa, Francis, Philip of Neri . . . as a lava stream which never cools . . . "*Caritas diffusa*," the outpouring, glowing, fiery love. Oh, we also love and wish to love more and more; he who loves is strong; he is strong because he loves; who is weak is weak because he does not love.

(*b*) The second grace is *zeal*. Jesus calls it baptism, fire-baptism. Love has to vanquish. Jesus brought fire and wished it to burn; He dropped embers upon our heart; but that flames should come from the embers, an instigating, stormy wind is needed, "*spiritus vehemens*"; thus "greater" love will come of it—"*diligis plus his*." This is the fire which burns in the veins of the Church, from this it "*suspirat et aspirat ad sanctitatem*," it prays for and aspires to sanctity. It has no peace. It sends out its armies: Apostles who present themselves with St. Paul saying, "my heart has enlarged towards you Corinthians"; the enlarged, opened heart characterises the Apostle; there is room in that heart. Love widened it and educated it to zeal . . . it taught it to "*suspirare, aspirare*."

(*c*) The third grace of Pentecost is the *soul of prayer*. Prayer is the atmosphere of the Holy Ghost. Prayer awaited Him, prayer called Him. Prayer accompanied Him and the Spirit Himself "prays in us with inexpressible groans," "*gemitibus*." "*Gemitus*," oh, this is the right word; it is like the cooing of the dove and the sound of evening bells! It is an intimate, deep, soft emotion! There is nothing more intimate than this ardent prayer! How it colours, radiates, how it softens, heats and renders happy! *Mel et oleum*, honey and oil! It soothes and is sweet. We have to beg for the soul of prayer and jealously guard it; when we have won it, we have to give thanks for it; if we are in want of it, we have to seek it. "*Spiritus gratiæ et precum*," that is one and the same. Grace and prayer go together. The Saints are the stylists of prayer! Let us pray therefore, that is, let us long and endeavour, let us pray and beg, let us deeply humiliate ourselves so that the Lord should come down to us!

THE PARACLETE

"*But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.*" (*John* xiv. 26.)

(*a*) He teaches you what you have not understood; from His teaching dogma becomes feeling, faith becomes life and hope becomes practice in you. He does not teach doctrines but life. The Spirit is not a schoolmaster but life-principle; His science is not letter but feeling, enthusiasm and strength. In this way the Holy Ghost endeavours to bring faith to living life, doctrine to emotion and warmth in us, that we should be anointed, enthusiastic men who testify to the Lord with their individuality. Therefore we have to experience the faith and doctrine about life and virtue; then it will belong to us. As long as we only have notions about it, it does not really have an effect upon our will; we have no experience. The notion and idea is only strong, if it awakes emotions; the feelings and emotions lived through over and again are power. That is why the doctrine, faith, and principle we comprehend are powerless, if we do not change them to feeling and experience. This is the reason for the void between speech and deed; we speak differently and act differently; "die ewige Melancholie des Besserwissens und Schlechtermachens."

(*b*) "*And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete . . . I will not leave you orphans.*" (*John* xiv. 16, 18.) The Holy Ghost is "*paraclytus*," helping, comforting Spirit. He protects and comforts, pours strength into us by the conscious experience of truth, He raises and emancipates us from the weakness of the world's illusions and fevers. He also protects us from the corruption which the temptation of life's worthlessness brings upon us. He helps us so that we may feel the immense values of our existence and soul and not throw ourselves away; that we may value above all the perfections of the heart and its inner value. He protects us also against the world, for He points to our good deeds, which can be denied; but it is impossible not to feel their weight. This Spirit shall be our help and make us ardent; water also turns to tense energy when it is heated; it is the same with the blood and the soul too.

(*c*) "*But when the Paraclete . . . cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.*" (*John* xv. 26.) That heart which has received the Holy Ghost has a great conception of Jesus and loves Him ardently; he becomes like Him and shows His face upon himself. These inextinguishable Christ-images point to the depths of Christ-like life; these growing vines which continually bring flavoured clusters for the eternal strength of the fiery, sweet vine tree. Therefore, he who has changed the strength of the Holy Ghost to life testifies of Christ. In us also the Holy Ghost testifies sin and righteousness; we wish faithfully to accept His lesson and judge accordingly.

THE GIFT OF GOD

(*a*) "*Altissimi donum Dei*," the Holy Ghost, "the sublime gift of God," brings us also a gift; He bestows sweet, beautiful, splendid life upon us. Earthly life is then sweet if it is not empty and is not filled with transitoriness. Transitoriness fills our consciousness with feeling of pain, and this saturates the worldly soul. It does not like to look around; it does not rise to heights; it is afraid to look into the future, it evades depth; and if it actually looks into depths it shudders and its countenance changes. In the measure as the shadows of transitoriness's late evenings grow, in that measure it is inconsolable. Is there a sadder sight than the face of a wanton old man? Whereas the Holy Ghost is the spirit, the soul of the deepest, strongest, most conscious life . . . He also bestows sweet life upon us, but His gifts bring the fullness of life; God gives life and makes it come to life; He gives health; strength flows from Him and the ailing souls whose life is being spilt become whole again; He gives pure blood; He gives eyesight: "*respice*," look upon me and recognise me. He gives faith, strength, emotion and softening, gives tears, enthusiasm and immortal hope.

(*b*) The spirit of the world also comes with fire; but its fire consumes; it is dark and full of smoke; is passionate; it awakes energies, makes exertions; makes much ado and much noise. Men work, run about, but indulge in excesses and are spent; and every such life is like the scar of the shepherd's fire in the middle of a flowery meadow. They let others have the strength of their life; the youthful age lives for rapture, the mature age for interest, and after having spent their strength, nothing else remains to them but sorrow and blaséness. Poor, scorched souls. Whereas the fire of the Holy Ghost, the warmth of ardour, the heat of enthusiasm, the bountiful warmth of life burns out the dregs and evil! It consumes what the Holy Scripture calls flesh in the bad sense; for where that reigns, there it does not remain; my spirit does not stay in man—says the Lord—for he is flesh; but I will destroy this fleshly man and pour my soul upon the heavy, sensual men and educate prophets; I will rub out the sleep and trance from their eyes. This is the fire which glows in us, it burns into us and we do not wish to be rid of its bounteous warmth. This is the warmth of life.

(*c*) The spirit of the world also wishes to create the world, to renew the world, to change it and accomplish great works of culture, to create great institutions; but it plants them in the earth, "they turn their minds away and cast their eyes down, so as not to see the heavens." The "*horror futuri sæculi*" surrounds them. Their work rather brings fatigue than freedom and chains them to their machines, it is by these they want to reign, but the great forces which they have freed have made serving men out of them. They become a personless, tyrannical power with a special psychology and temperament, and they plague humanity; they preach a passionate pushing forward as the task of life with great logical consequence but with psychological absurdity. Whereas the Spirit of God wishes to shape the world from the inside, from inner principles, bounty and truth, and therefore He develops it into beauty. He frees souls to liberty, who are satisfied with little and who only use the world, work the brain and its achievements so that the life of the soul should develop beautifully and nobly. Dignity and feverish consummation of self is nowhere and never with them. We are to walk in the world with God-loving, unpretentious soul and spirit; we are to look every flower in the eyes so as to tell them: that is why thou art, that I should also be beautiful; we have to sit down beside the well upon the shadowy lawn so as to think of the wells of divine depths with love which rises forth in us as ideas and feelings.

GRIEVE NOT THE SPIRIT

"*And grieve not the holy spirit of God.*" (*Ephes.* iv. 30.)

(*a*) The idea seizes our soul that we might grieve Him. If we can cause Him grief, then He loves us, cares about us. And verily how deep are His grievances! The first one is hell, "His sorrowful anger"; the second one is death, which descended upon beautiful life against His will; the third sorrow of His is sin, for "the Holy Spirit of discipline is frightened away from the coming falseness." If we grieve Him it is really we who become sad; slowly our real joys which grow in the souls filled with God, become lost; our senses and inclinations get an earthly flavour. Soul, spirit and grace become transparent, dissolving views and the traits of tedium and old age show upon us; we fall out. God beware; let us serve the Lord "*in lætitia.*"

(*b*) "*Extinguish not the Spirit.*" (1 *Thess.* v. 19.) The Holy Ghost is a flame of fire, but the fire can also be quenched; the soul can be killed. The reckless and repeated committing of pardonable sins quenches the feeling of ardour and attachment and cools down this fine, delicate soul; "*res delicata Spiritus.*" No wonder that the reckless soul which does not care about small sins falls into committing deadly ones also. Therefore we have to take care and avoid every intentional offence against God; we have to be fastidious about our life.

(*c*) Do not throw away the soul . . . by your lowly, base conduct. We feel and experience that the Holy Ghost merits attention, willingness, and obligingness, and we always have to stand upon this height of feeling. The soul can also become rough, it can loose the dignity of intactness and the beauty of justice and hardly feel the initiations of the Spirit. Behold, by our sensitiveness we may be the organs of the Holy Ghost and He then lives in us, we may be His tools and He works through us; but we can also be a broken lute and a wasted swamp. Therefore we will attend to the initiations and inspirations of the Holy Ghost!

SPIRIT OF LIFE

"*Spirit of life.*" (*Rom.* viii. 2.)

(*a*) It is Pentecost, the feast of the Spirit. He descended from heaven upon the wings of the hurricane, the roaring of the wind is His tolling, He brought down His lightning and changed it to fiery tongues; He left His angels up there, but placed seraphical, brave souls into the world, the Apostles; fiery words, inspired faces, moved crowds are His works. It is Pentecost. This Spirit is the spirit and soul of faith and also that of divine love, purified spirituality and excelling morality; *caritas et spiritualis unctio.*

1. The Spirit is not science. We may know much and yet have no soul, no spirit. The Spirit is ardour, depth, passion, conviction, joy of life, energy which penetrates and raises man.

2. The Spirit is not culture; reading and writing, the products of culture, are cold, they do not draw and fill us; bridges, machines, monuments are rather loads which often press us down to the feeling of our unpretentiousness. The Spirit is fullness, pleasure, sweetness, energy.

3. The Spirit is not the outer world, whether it be pomp, fame, or assertion; lovely towns, boulevards, statues, triumphal arches may all be grey and faded; we either forget them or get used to them; the Spirit is the inner world, the consciousness of divine life and strength.

4. The Spirit is not progress; progress is a foggy, rough way with immeasurable perspectives, full of mystery but also aimlessness; whereas the Spirit is our sweet present and spring-like hope. Concerning humanity progress is like the blossoming row of acacia trees through which the express train passes and breathes its stifling smoke into its blossoming boughs; we feel this stifling smoke and the blossoming acacia is to us like the bridal veil which only covers the face. Whereas the Spirit is

that eternal, superior life which we already begin here on earth and are sure of its immortal future!

5. The Spirit is not flesh, not sense, not sensual joy and pleasure; those are all quickly fading flowers and what is more flowers which easily narcotize and poison; the Spirit is power standing above flesh and senses, which goes its own ways and aspires towards the infinite God, which possesses its beauty in purity, morality, and the harmony of consciousness, which develops this beauty from the contact with God and from His influence, and which completely hands this over to Him in devotion; it feels itself empty without it.

6. The Spirit is not you . . . not . . . he. Not world, nor family; not father, mother, child, not that other one however near those may stand to me. The Spirit is the "I," that is mine. The world of my reality, of my consciousness; the way I believe, live, endure, strive, trust. . . . I, I myself . . . floating by myself on an airship seized by the storm . . . or being by myself on a shipwreck upon the ocean . . . or being buried alive all alone. I, in whom God lives; I, who in myself and through myself come upon God and am one with Him.

7. The Spirit is not theology or scientific school. Theology endeavours to give some sort of expression of divine existence and life. To comprehend it and formulate it. This endeavour may fail more or less; the formulas may be insufficient. For mysterious, divine life is independent of theological formula. How much systematical theology is there in the Saints of God? Very little, to be sure.

(*b*) The Holy Scripture calls this inner world Heaven, the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is that inner world which the Holy Ghost shapes in our soul : virtuousness, peace, joy. Virtuousness is light as well as strength and beauty, accord and shape, discipline and proportion ; we experience this inner reality in our virtuous acts ; in faith, hope, love, trust, zeal, strife, in the endeavouring, brave, attached, noble, pure, humble, patient, willing, fine, ready, goodwilled, interested, noble-minded, lenient, sacrificial, humble, unpretentious, and sublime disposition which clings to God. We enjoy this disposition and frame of mind as peace and sweet joy. This kingdom of God can have infinitely many editions ; but each of them is inspired by the Holy Ghost, He keeps them alive. We call this state of the soul the state of grace and we have to value it above all : divine life is the real treasure.

(*c*) We fall out of this state by mortal sin. The soul of God departs from a soul which sins mortally, and the bond of intimate love with God is torn ; it loses the beauty of its soul life, that special divine beauty, divine shape and divine harmony. If such a one would become renowned, become a scholar, if angels were to give him their beauty it would be of no use to him as soon as his connection with the infinite life ceases ; from the vine of eternal, divine life this vine branch is torn off ; his life does not bring fruit, that is divine value and merit. Where should it bring it from if his root is no more God ? Without me ye can do naught . . . what counts with me, is what ye cannot accomplish without me. If ye are in mortal sin, I help you that ye might be converted and keep the law, but divine life which ye might live in sweet consciousness with me, that I give from my heart and share with you, that will not be in you. There are smaller sinners also. To these I say : Look into the face of the divine souls united with the Holy Ghost, be filled with His beauty and do not cast shadows upon Him. Those who sin pardonably, and indifferently, not caring about the soul, those sadden the Spirit. Grieve not the Spirit. Disturb not this clear eye, do not cover this unclouded face with wrinkles and soullessness. Do not render it rough; it is so transparent, therefore do not dull it; it is so soft and sensitive and at the same time strong and living, do not poison the sources of its strength.

WHAT MEANETH THIS

"*And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together. . . . And they were all astonished, and wondered, saying one to another: What meaneth this? But others mocking, said: These men are full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spoke to them . . .*" (*Acts* ii. 6, 12, 13, 14.)

(*a*) The Holy Ghost induces to speech and also to attention; so that we should give and also receive. He induces us to hear willingly and receive advice. We always derive profit from the animation and sermon of others if we do not criticise the preacher but our own soul. "There is no such bad sermon from which we cannot derive some sort of profit"—says St. Theresa, one of the most clever women. If we read an edifying book do not let us see to imparting it to others but frankly humiliating ourselves let us derive profit for our soul from it. The Apostles spoke of God, soul, holy life, and the great things of God for they were filled with these; others praise the worldly life for they do not know the divine inner self and depth in themselves. Let us dive deeper; how miserable that man is who is imposed on by the world and the pettiness of existence and who does not awake to the consciousness of his own greatness. The Holy Ghost turns us towards our own self and beckons to eternal worlds.

(*b*) "*And they were all astonished, and wondered, saying one to another: What meaneth this? But others mocking, said: These men are full of new wine.*" (*Acts* ii. 12.) Behold two impressions and two judgments; amazement and mocking at one and the same occasion. The soul receives its impressions according to its own moods. There are objective and subjective elements in them. The reflecting soul has to pick these apart, it is not allowed to follow the subjective impulse one-sidedly, otherwise it becomes the clown of its own self. The world is full of subjectivity and yet there is little real *subjectum* in it, little of the reflecting, emancipated, purified individuality. Such an individuality tears the illusions of subjective impressions to pieces and does not judge without first trying to be objectively informed. Do not let us be taken in by our impressions; let us always say: such is my impression, but I will see to it that it is not too relative and subjective.

CHRISTIANS

"*And there were added in that day about three thousand souls.*" (*Acts* ii .41.)

(*a*) We are Christians and we reflect upon the principles by which we became such. We became Christians by having recognised the *divine authority* in Christ and by having given ourselves over to Him, He guides and He educates us. Concerning the *truth* we follow the divine authority of the *Master*; concerning the development and augmentation of soul life we use the Saviour's means of grace; concerning the collaboration of the followers, our brothers, we pay reverence to the governing, administrating *apostolic authority*. All this divine authority we find in the Church. God placed it in the Church; He vouched for it; He tends this great, governing, administrating power. No wonder. For this is His institution. Air cannot be entrusted to physics, and water cannot be produced in the filters of the laboratories; crops cannot be expected from the hot-houses, and mother-love from schoolgirls; these elements which keep up existence have to stream forth from other sources; just so one cannot expect that connection between God and and the human souls from science and the pulpits, which has to be as general as the sunshine and the air; that is entrusted to the divine authority which is immortalised in the Church. We believe and rejoice! We do not look at the man; in the Pope we do not look if he is Italian or French; we do not search for the intrigue and politics which are also asserted in the Church. All this is human but the decision and tendency of the authority is divine; this suffices us!

(*b*) Everyone became Christian not by the enjoyment of the "rabbi's" doctrine, neither by philosophising, but they had to join the apostolic teachers if they wished to become Christians and had to obey them. They had to get to know from the Apostles what the Master says; those who wanted to be more clever ceased to be Christians; they were locked out. Behold, Christianity is not a doctrine but a fact, following the conviction it is being received into the Church and in the Church itself it is homage, obedience, and attachment to the apostolic authority. Behold the great fact: to be attached to authority and to live from it! As the life of the people of the Orient is the same to-day as it was in the days of the patriarchs, so the Church in so far as it carries faith and moral principles is an unchanged, continually living antiquity. Living and not dying in a thousand years! It is under this authority that we live and die . . . by this authority we are near to Christ; we have a "Holy Father," we have a spiritual father. How good for us! If Europe is the scene of variations, yet its most powerful institution is the Church standing upon unvarying authority. That it is which carries the life of the peoples; that it is which also tends the world of souls. It is the Church which effects the connection with the eternal regions; it is good for us to be here! We live, live in attached faithfulness and if we seek Christ we turn to the Church. What we have to believe, that we receive here; what we have to feel towards sin and virtue, we derive herefrom. We reverence the institutions and customs of this home of our soul; we do not follow the footsteps of those who forget to live and rejoice because of arguing. "Here is the House of God and the gates of Heaven." We are not to loiter about the gate but run in and feel ourselves at home!

(*c*) Everyone became Christian by the earthly form of the great unity of Saints, by enthusiasm for the Church. It is a sublime, divine creation; the treasure of Christ; the assembly of the élite souls. Everyone has to glow for its good and honour. Let the Church of God be a great sublime dome; the framing of the Gospel and the Sacrament; the frame of Christ's real, true face and the Grail cup of His anointed soul. Let it be a uniform, unique Church; formerly they wished for national Churches. De Bausset writes to Bossuet: "Your Eminency we want an independent, free—national—Church; this is the point where we separate." No, oh no, we want a uniform, Christ-like Church. Let it be holy and filled with spirit and soul; this shall be its ambition. Formerly it was the tendency that the Church should be a master and a great power and should also reign above the state. We do not bother about this; our wish and longing is that the Mother Church should embrace as many souls as possible and more and more beautiful ones on to her heart. Let us love the Church as the Jews loved the city of Jerusalem: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee; if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy." (*Psalms* cxxxvi. 5, 6.)

THE SPIRIT OF PENTECOST

The spirit of Pentecost compared with the spirit of Christmas and Easter.

(*a*) At the first Christmas in Bethlehem there was no feast but rather a fair; great crowds swayed along the streets and they did not notice Him who was already amongst us. Then it became night and great, deep, midnight silence and no one expected him. Whereas Pentecost is a feast, a great day, for the feast of the law is an important morning in Jerusalem. Inside they await Him and pray, and behold it is then that He descends in roaring storm from the heavens above, and shines above the assembly of the Apostles. With this He indicates: (1) That we are to await Him longingly. We have to expect Him, He will come and give us grace; we cannot create strength, but He gives it and gives Himself also; let us prepare a place for Him; humility attracts Him. (2) Let us long for Him—*Veni*, *veni*, this is the longing and wish of the soul. How they longed, and who would not long for Him? How glorious and abundant this Holy Ghost is! The soul longs for its father, teacher, and master. For He is our Father; we were born of the Holy Ghost, we were baptised in the Spirit, and we become strong by the Spirit. The Spirit prays in us with *inexpressible longing*; we coo like His doves. Why should He not come to us?

(*b*) Easter is the feast of victory and glory but the hearts do not yet take it in. Blood and the cross mark the scene, and also the up-turned grave-stone. The Lord's troop is a beaten army which intrigue, lies, and violence fill with fear and dread. The Life is already risen from the grave but has only appeared to His disciples. His strength has not flooded to the outside. Whereas Pentecost is the feast of glorious outpouring life, His strength roars down from the high heavens and occupies space. His fire kindles; from His lamp columns of fire start out into the world. Oh, see this victorious Spirit! Our soul to Him is as a block of crystal in which He sparklingly breaks His rays, He shines and blinds. He is not satisfied with shafts and sparks, He needs a conflagration. The soul of the Apostles catches fire from Him, also the heart of the martyrs and the blood of the virgins. He wishes to consume everybody; " I pour out my soul upon everybody"; I change the "rock to fresh grove and the desert to an oasis" and they will be re-created. Rock and desert am I also. Help and teach me!

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

"*And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" (*Acts* ii. 42.)

(*a*) The Holy Ghost points to the three characteristics of the spiritual life of the Apostolic Church. The beautiful world is built upon simple forces; simple principles create the beauty of the first spring of Christian life. We have to persevere in the teaching of the Apostles. Shape, proportion and frame is needed first of all for the beautiful life; rich contents are needed from which the soul shapes its world; fertile soil is needed from which its roots can nourish themselves. Apostolic doctrine presents these. It gives rich sources and blessed pastures. Left to ourselves we grope about in the dark, start in the wrong direction and become the sacrifices of our suggestions and illusions. We stand in the world without fertility, barren. The Apostolic doctrine gives us ideal, moral direction and strength. Whatever talents and fire there may be in us let us trustingly occupy these colonies of life, beauty and happiness; let us rise forth in spring-like pomp. Let not the many bunglers impose on us who always find new ways of failure.

(*b*) "*In the communication of the breaking of bread.*" For life bread is wanted; continually fresh blood and fresh spirit is wanted; this we take from Christ. He is our bread; He becomes our life, our strength. How often the world has changed since then; how different liturgy is now from then, the Church and man are different to what they were in the apostolic times; but upon the altar the Sacrament is the same and the hunger kneeling before the altar is also the same. We beg for bread; we receive Jesus' life; this is the key to the apostolic Church and the Christ-like life of the XX Century.

(*c*) "*And in prayers . . .*" They could pray well; we often read that when they prayed the Holy Ghost descended upon them; it is visible that their prayer was a heaven-beseeching, violent prayer. We also want to pray ardently, like someone who is in great need of something and can only acquire it by begging and entreaty. We wish to acquire something by our prayer; we do not pray out of custom but because of crying want. We know that we have also to place our entire being into our life and we have to develop the forces of nature just as ardently as the energy of prayer of the soul. This is how nature and grace assert themselves and not contrarily, so that he who prays awaits everything from God and does not exert himself, and he who exerts himself awaits everything from nature and does not pray. These are disfigurements and degenerations.

PAUL THE APOSTLE

Paulus apostolus.

(*a*) "*Know you not that they who work in the holy place eat the things that are of the holy place . . . ? But I have used none of these things.*" (1 *Cor.* ix. 13.) St. Paul throws open his soul. Not the gaining of bread carries him. He is Apostle from passion and not from office. His apostleship is heat and fire, he offered his life for the salvation of the souls and he has to save the souls because he loves Christ. He not only has it before his eyes that the souls should not go to hell, but the love of the Lord encourages him as if He would say to him: Paul. dost love me? Oh, if thou lovest me, thou knowest what thou art to do. Save and *salvate*! This is the love which seizes him, this love is his lord and he is its servant. St. Augustine calls this "*luminosissima, flagrantissima caritas, ineffabilis potestas*." St. Paul appropriately characterises how powerful this strength is and how ardent this passion when he calls it necessary. "*Necessitas mihi incubit*." Ye see how I work, and am devout and glow; but do not wonder. This I have to do, ardour seizes me. He goes so far as to say: "If I do this work rejoicingly I have merit; and if I do it from necessity . . . what is my reward?" I have no merit in this. Do not praise me for all this work, for it is so with me that I act from sweet necessity, this is such joy to me that I fly towards it; and why shall ye praise me for this? I am carried away. We could say to this with Festus: Paul, thou ravest; love has confused thee! Elsewhere he complained of the necessity of instinct when he said: I feel a different law in my limbs and my blood; I do not do what I will; but he rejoices in the necessity of love and calls himself the subject of glowing, ardent love. Love does what it wills with me; do not praise me. *Infelix ego homo*! he cried at mention of the former law, and now we cry: *O felix homo!* What a happy man who loves so. Love for the Lord Jesus makes St. Paul glow with ardour and enthusiasm for the souls.

If someone wants to be ardent he can be so from many motives. But the most fertile one is the love for the Lord Jesus. If the Lord Jesus warms and fires one, if love seizes him, then he has immeasurable, unquenchable ardour.

(*b*) "*For whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more.*" (1 *Cor.* ix. 19.) St. Paul identifies this ardour with complete devotion. He places his all, his entire life into his apostolic work, his joys, worries and freedom; he adapts himself to everyone so as to win everyone. This he only mentions to capture the hearts and lead them to Christ; I was free and in need of no one but I resigned my liberty and made myself servant unto all. I might have lived as a respectable Pharisee in seclusion; but I did not do so; I came to serve and put my life into service. I could be an anchoret and live for myself; and now I live for everyone and serve all so that I might lead everyone to Christ. Elsewhere he says that he is like a nurse, not like a mother, but a serving nurse. Nurse who feeds the children of Christ with her milk; who does so from devotion and not for fees. What a sublime, golden, shining soul this St. Paul was! How we have to warm ourselves at this fire, and go to his school! We will only then be completely happy if we hit upon this, if we endeavour to help others with our blood and life and to help everyone we can. What a blessed vocation to prove good as an Apostle and find happiness in renunciation. But this renunciation is filled with rich happiness and pleasure.

(*c*) "*For it is good for me to die, rather than that any man should make my glory void.*" (1 *Cor.* ix. 15.) St. Paul presents himself in complete unselfishness. His heart aches for those who suspect that he gains something. I do not gain anything and yet the law says: "*Non alligabis os bovi trituranti*," thou dost not tie the mouth of the ox of burden, and the soldiers of Cæsar also receive payment; and he himself also said that those who serve the altar are to live by the altar, and after all this he yet says: I do not need that either. I would rather die than not capture the glory of complete unselfishness. And what will my glory and crown finally be? Naught else than the Gospel itself; I feel happy if I can preach the Gospel. Our disposition shall be unselfishness. Selfishness degrades; it degrades the hero to a farm labourer. Let the eagle remain eagle and the hero hero, they are not to search for inferiors! My glory is that I only love you and do not accept any service from you; it is I who serve you.

(*d*) And when the "*Paulus insaniens*" serves with such ardour and fire, and complete devotion and unselfishness, then at the same time he is as humble as a child. He does not trust himself; and the most shining feature of the hero's and Apostle's soul is his child-like humility: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." (ix. 27.) These are the fertile souls; souls which glow but are also humble; which are heroes but are also anxious; not as if they would doubt God, but because they know that the "*inferior homo*" lives in them who is always is need of spurs, discipline and self-denial. Let us learn enthusiasm and ardour from the glowing heart of this great soul. If our ardour cools and human ungrateful-ness extinguishes the holy fire, when the swampy atmosphere of the great world threatens apostolic self-sacrifice with danger, then let us read the Letters of St. Paul and we will work for Christ unselfishly and devotedly.

SACRIFICE

"*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck . . . in journeying often, in perils of waters . . . in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea . . .*" (2 *Cor.* xi. 25.)

(*a*) Why had St. Paul to suffer so much? Firstly, because Christ trod these ways for His Apostles. The Lord Jesus is the vine tree the shoots of which have golden clusters; in stony ground tied to the post, to the cross. Who does not tie the shoots to the post cannot expect fruit. The Lord Jesus demands sacrifice at every grade of perfection; from the apostolic workers he awaits even greater self-denial. Those are Christ-like types. Upon this Christ-like face the expression of dignity resides but there are also holy shadows, the clouds of anxiety. Every Apostle suffers and is anxious; he weeps for the mistakes of his weak children, their falling back to the torpor of the world hurts him. The salvation of the souls fills him with anxiety and their damnation saddens him. Added to this is that inner work that is fretting for the souls and self-consummation. Sacrifice, sacrifice is what thou needest, O ardent soul, at every grade of perfection; whether thou goest upon the way of purification or that of enlightenment, whether thou art one who progresses, or strivest already to the heights of union, all these ways are those of struggle, without sacrifice thou canst not proceed upon them.

(*b*) Sacrifices have to be made, for the Apostle forms men, works with souls, struggles with passions, and this material is harder than porphyry; the souls are difficult to treat, the passions are more bloodthirsty than the wild beasts. If we shape porphyry stones, many steel chisels become jagged; and those who shape souls suffer much, sweat much and are in agony; they suffer and become jagged and all that causes pain! They have to pray much, and pray ardently, to humiliate themselves deeply and count with the variableness of the human souls. We cannot be quite reassured until we have closed a man's eyes and so to say carried his soul in our hands from the grace of absolution to the presence of God. Oh, what a work and anxiety; but it is worth while. For if ye found schools and help the poor, ye do not do such great good as when ye help one soul to salvation: nor does the Apostle wish for other glory than to be able to save souls. "Ye art our glory," says St. Paul of his followers. I do not wish for other flowers than those which the fire of my love created.

(*c*) And where do these flowers blossom? Everywhere, in the suffering classes of the people just as in kingly courts. They rise forth from miserable earth, from mud, but in the strength of the grace of God and in that of careful bringing up which I impart to them, they develop. Let not our ardour be cooled by the viewing of many miserable examples. Let us think of the Apostles who brought the world into motion and educated holy Christianity with blood and sweat. Bones and blood fertilised the ploughing field of the world. We also wish to step into the heritage of the Apostles and be ardent, fiery-souled Christians.

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